

**Magically Strategized Belonging:
Magical Realism as Cosmopolitan Mapping in
Ben Okri, Cristina García, and Salman Rushdie**

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Chapter One

Cosmopolitan Cartography: Magical Realism's Constructive Capacity

"Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." –Benedict Anderson¹

Since literary magical realism exploded out of Latin America and into international critical attention in the mid twentieth century, the limbs of its narrative genealogy continue to be sketched in both lower and higher than the branch bearing the immense impact of *el boom*. Perhaps the most often cited figure from magical realism's pre-Latin American and pre-literary phase is Franz Roh, who deployed the term in 1925 to describe the German painting movement *Magischer realismus*, as critics such as Irene Guenther, Kenneth Reeds, Wendy Faris, and Lois Parkinson Zamora have shown.² After having migrated transatlantically, magical realism mutated formally in the process whereby it came to be embodied in Latin American literature.

Following the boom of the 1950s and 60s magical realism began to be recognized as a global phenomenon. Literary magical realism has now been written by authors from innumerable countries of origin and thus is not the sole property of Latin Americans, as Alejo Carpentier might have us believe. Erik Camayd-Freixas, who himself contends for the delimitation of a distinct Latin American magical realism, still concedes that the mode is "today's most compelling world fiction" (583). In addition to Carpentier, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Gabriel García Márquez, and Isabel Allende, among other significant Latin American magical realists, key contributions to the mode's corpus have since been recognized in the works of Jack Hodgins, Louise Erdrich, Robert Kroetsch, and Toni Morrison. Beyond the American continents, Wen-chin Ouyang points out: "[Magical realism] is in Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Italian, Japanese, Persian, Portuguese, Spanish, Tibetan, and Turkish, to name but a few languages" (15).

One recent example of magical realism is Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), analyzed in this study. Considering this novel in conjunction with the landmark 1949 publication of Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World* (*El reino de este mundo*), including its famous prologue, these two magical realist texts represent a significant development in magical realist authorship among East and West Indies.³ Furthermore, they form two temporal poles between which there is a nearly sixty-year time span, a figure that does not include texts preceding the Latin American boom.

Magical realism has traversed boundaries of many kinds. It has crossed temporal eras, vast geographical distances, linguistic borders, and forms. Since its transformation from philosophy and painting to literature, a more recent trend has been the metamorphoses from magical realist literature to theater and film.⁴ Clearly, the mode has proven extremely elastic, and it is just this adaptability that explains a significant aspect of its creative and critical persistence. Yet, the mode has been underestimated. I am not here merely responding to skeptics of magical realism by pointing to the stubborn endurance of the term, though that point is true. What I want to draw attention to addresses those within the magical realist fold, as it were, those who have engaged or are engaging with this aesthetic creatively and/or analytically. I mean to contend that magical realism proves to be far more malleable than perhaps anyone deploying the term within very particular historical moments, locations, and political frameworks may have been able to foresee, crucial as these specific usages have been to the mode's development and genealogy. We are beginning to see that this aesthetic is thin enough to structure diverse projects and even divergent, incompatible views, and this is a benefit, I hasten to add, for it means that the mode is capable of continuing beyond a specific historical exigency. I will take Carpentier back up at this point, then. Extending his argument about the "baroque" attributes of *lo real maravilloso* to

magical realism in general, the mode's aesthetic thinness recommends it as a cyclically recurring spirit as opposed to a "historical style" frozen in time ("Baroque" 95).⁵

The particularist view of magical realism, that which sees the mode as requiring specific thematic and extratextual deployments, is demonstrated in a critical debate regarding magical realism's functionality. Specifically, this discussion concerns the question how is magical realism positioned in relation to the two contrasting operations of deconstruction and construction. What is its capacity to effect either or both of these outcomes? A prominent view has developed which understands the mode as one that structures an exclusively deconstructive narratology, a position erroneously supported by the particularist view (and vice versa). This study takes a different position, demonstrating that the parameters of magical realist poetics are broad enough to encompass both functions. Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), and Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) all evince this, as they appropriate the distinct techniques offered by magical realism to construct various strategies, or models, of belonging in the world, as will be demonstrated at length in the subsequent chapters. Magical realist history also corroborates this position. As will be demonstrated shortly, the mode has been a vehicle for both construction and deconstruction throughout its diverse incarnations.

In addition to insights from the mode's historical usages, this dual capacity becomes evident when particular (if predominant) thematic and political deployments are distinguished from magical realism's minimal aesthetic requirements. This differentiation requires an understanding of what the fundamental characteristics are that constitute the mode. After this is clarified, magical realism can be separated from a historical, thematic usage and considered more broadly and afresh.

In making this distinction between aesthetics and particular deployments, I am, on the one hand, picking up and continuing an old critical argument, a “secular schism in Magical-Realist scholarship” that has never been resolved since Roh and Carpentier, describes Camayd-Freixas (584). This is a debate over whether the mode should be defined formally or thematically, or, as Frederick Luis Aldama describes it, a debate between magical realism as an aesthetic or an “ethnopoetics,” or socioanthropological artifact (1, 9).⁶ In their anthology Zamora and Faris comment on the divergent views among two of the mode’s founders: “Roh’s emphasis is on aesthetic expression, Carpentier’s on cultural and geographical identity,” the latter being reflected in primitivist thematics such as Afro-Cuban voodoo. Significantly, Camayd-Freixas observes, Zamora and Faris formulate magical realism as a conversation which should include both Roh and Carpentier, aesthetics and thematics, as is implicit in their inclusion of both in their anthology and is explicit in the view they espouse here: “Despite their different perspectives, Roh and Carpentier share the conviction that magical realism defines a revisionary position with respect to the generic practices of their times and media; each engages the concept to discuss what he considers an antidote to existing and exhausted forms of expression” (7).⁷

While I agree that magical realism includes both thematic and aesthetic aspects, this is true only in a specific sense. A robust understanding of magical realism requires both a close-up view in which one perceives the numerous different applications (i.e. the postcolonial), including how these specific usages have adapted the mode, and a bird’s-eye view, a panoramic perspective of the magical realist timeline in its entirety, including an understanding of why and how magical realism as a theoretical term has attracted myriad usages.

As examples of the mode continue to proliferate the need to separate aesthetics from thematics has become (again) compelling. This debate, then, is also recent, pressing afresh the

necessity of reviving—and working towards resolving—it. This is an issue underlying, I suggest, contemporary critics' advocating expansions in our understanding of the mode. Faris, Ouyang, and Christopher Warnes have each pointed to areas of exclusion within magical realist criticism wherein the mode's constructive capacities are overlooked, as I will describe in more detail later. For now, it is enough to note that these exclusions indicate that the critical registers available to us for engaging with magical realism are too narrow, and this problem stems in part from a narrow, particularist view of the mode, one which has married thematics and extratextual issues with aesthetics.

Untangling these issues requires a new look at magical realism and some of its most basic presumptions. What are the implications of magical realism? What might it mean for a narrative to be written in this modality? How do we as readers and critics interpret its conspicuous magic? What is the potential range of narrative magic's functionality? This study re-poses and responds to these questions lying at the heart of magical realist hermeneutics with a view to re-evaluating limited critical paradigms.

Construction, Deconstruction, and the Question of Authorship

Ouyang and Warnes have recently objected to what they contend is the predominant critical rubric for magical realist texts for the way it equates the mode with a deconstructive narratology, a framework that lacks the theoretical space for a corresponding understanding of how the mode might also be used to construct. Ouyang asks: "Is magical realism deconstructive only or is it constructive as well?" (18). Warnes has posed a similar point, criticizing "the ways magical realism is so often automatically seen to deconstruct notions of subjectivity, history, nationhood, reality, without any sense of how it can also constructs these notions" (7). From where might this

idea come? Is deconstruction a function inherent to the mode's aesthetic DNA, or is this an issue of critical hermeneutics?

One can link this notion with significant deployments in the mode's historical development. Magical realism is closely allied with postcolonialist and/or postmodernist politics of resistance. This is apparent in Stephen Slemon's observation of magical realism's social signification: "[...] a structure of perception—if only in literary critical registers—dogs the practice of magical realist writing, that is, the perception that magic realism, as a socially symbolic contract, carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial center and to its totalizing systems of generic classification" (408). While Slemon is writing this in the context of a postcolonial analysis of the mode, this same perspective concerning the author's/narrative's political orientation is carried into postmodernist analyses, as will be seen. The deconstructivist paradigm sees the mode as coterminous with resistance politics.

Within both the postcolonialist and postmodernist strains, this resistance is often understood as taking the following approach: the non- or supra-rational is deployed to destabilize perceived hegemonic Western epistemology and empire.⁸ According to this, the mode is a defensive strategy defined negatively by what it is positioned against—anti-Western epistemology, anti-realism, and anti-hegemony. Its line of attack is destabilization so that, confusingly, according to Ouyang all texts which express “resistance to, subversion and reconfiguration of what may be termed ‘modern Western epistemology’, whether in the form of empiricism or empire, are uncovered, discussed and packaged as magical realism” (16). This defensive strategy, when taken as magical realism's only one, contrasts with and obscures an offensive strategy, ways by which the mode creates, builds, and constructs; though, it is not that magical realist literature has

not functioned constructively or that significant critical research has not, at times, drawn attention to this, as will be looked at now.

I will organize the tracing of magical realism's dual capacities, deconstruction and construction, through a third, related element, authorship, a topic which in itself has been a significant thread of debate running throughout the mode's critical history. While numerous critics have traced the genealogy of the term *magical realism*, an illuminating project, by following the evolving perception of authorship, or who qualifies as an authentic magical realist storyteller, one is able to isolate precise points where magical realism has been married to specific deconstructive templates. This is true precisely because the intimate relationship between the mode and extratextual, political factors has often delimited potential authorship. By using authorship as a guiding rubric, it should be noted, I do not always follow a temporal progression, but an expansion, or widening, in what begins as a very restricted group identity. Moreover, these are not completely isolated categories; they overlap at certain points so that some authors might be situated within more than one phase.

As mentioned, the term *magical realism* did not originate in Latin America. Prior to two key applications of it in the early twentieth century, Roh's painterly as well as Italian Massimo Bontempelli's artistic and literary, Guenther traces the term as far back as the late eighteenth century, when it was deployed by Novalis, the German Romantic philosopher (34).⁹ She also mentions its application in early to mid twentieth-century German literary criticism, as well as in the classification of numerous authors from Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium (59-60). Günter Grass was employing this technique in 1959 against the tyranny of the Nazi regime in his novel *The Tin Drum* (*Die Blechtrommel*), as Faris shows ("Scheherazade" 179). This is the same time that the boom authors were writing. In fact, Grass's novel precedes García Márquez's

seminal *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (*Cien años de soledad*) (1967) by eight years.

Nevertheless, it is in Latin America that the mode is first extensively developed (as literature) and gains wide recognition, thanks in large part to García Márquez's novel.¹⁰ One can look to this phase, then, to discover definitive frameworks.

According to Chanady's timeline, when the term reappears in Latin America in the 1940s it refers explicitly to "a means of expressing the authentic American mentality" and an "autonomous literature" (*Magical* 17). As this suggests, magical realism is at this time deployed to "territorialize," in Chanady's terminology, Latin America and its exclusive, marvelous ontology ("Territorialization"). Carpentier, Asturias, and García Márquez are key figures advancing this position. In his Nobel Lecture, García Márquez territorializes Latin America when he contends that Latin Americans' "crucial problem" is "a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable," thereby coyly intimating that magical realism is the only aesthetic capable of encompassing their "outsized reality" ("Solitude" 89).

A significant mechanism of territorialization involved the source from which narrative magic was frequently derived. Chanady explains that "the presence of the supernatural is often attributed to the primitive or 'magical' Indian," or African, it could be added, "mentality" (*Magical* 19).¹¹ In Carpentier's short story "Journey to the Seed" ("*Viaje a la semilla*"), for example, after "*el negro viejo*," the old Afro-Cuban servant Melchor, causes time to reverse, the narrative juxtaposes a superior, autochthonous connection to the natural world with the loss of this connection which stems from Western learning and legal practices (59).¹² African and American Indian indigenous worldviews offered a pivotal political strategy through which Latin American intellectuals combated the hegemony of (neo)colonialists: they countered the purported superiority of the North/West and its rationality through anti-rationalist beliefs. From

this early, crucial foundation, then, magic is deployed against Western reason. This is a formative paradigm, one which recurs throughout later engagements with the mode.

They were not completely original in this tactic. As Chanady shows, magical realists Carpentier, Asturias, and Julio Cortázar furthered the strategy begun by two other contemporaneous movements. One is Latin American antipositivism, a reaction to the rise of the US as a neocolonial force.¹³ “The antipositivistic subversion of the neocolonial hierarchy” criticized and rejected reason in order to claim both “difference” and “superiority” from those who imposed rationalist models of thinking and being upon them. Their purpose in doing so was to undermine key premises upon which Western claims of supremacy were grounded: “It is hardly surprising that Latin American intellectuals questioned the European rational canon. One of the criteria for the conceptual ‘Calibanization’ of the colonized was their supposed absence of reasoning faculties.” She adds: “Claiming that a Latin American (or generally Hispanic) philosophy was different but equal to the Franco-German tradition, and even criticizing the claim to universality of European philosophical systems, became a means of questioning one of the main criteria of Western superiority” (133-36). The Surrealists had also been deploying aesthetic techniques such as automatic writing and eccentric juxtapositions in order to critique reason from within the empire, and this through the “valorization of non-European mentalities” of so-called primitive peoples (Chanady “Territorialization” 137-41). In the 1920s Asturias and Carpentier were both affiliated with French Surrealists while they were in Paris, though Carpentier later explicitly rejects the Surrealists’ “manufactured mystery” for “the marvelous real” which “is encountered in its raw state, latent and omnipresent, in all that is Latin American” (“Baroque” 104).

While it is important to note that there are exceptions to the pairing of magic and indigenous resources, the view that this link is absolutely necessary is so pervasive that in 1985 Chanady must actually make a case for the inclusion of García Márquez and his *One Hundred Years* in the magical realist framework because he looked for supernatural resources outside of the autochthonous, depicting magic that stemmed merely from “the author’s imagination” (“Origins” 56). That Chanady had to propose this argument is a task that today, twenty-five years later, strikes one as odd because of the paramount position this novel has acquired in any magical realist corpus. Nevertheless, this demonstrates an early point in magical realist theory wherein the thematic content and extratextual usages of indigenous resources were viewed as nearly mandatory in the DNA of the mode.¹⁴

Camayd-Freixas observes that this paradigm continues in Latin Americanist magical realist scholarship today:

[...] the Latin American trend has been to reduce the scope of Magical Realism to a handful of authors and texts. While far from a consensus, most [Latin American] critics now lean towards an ethnological version of Magical Realism, with Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Juan Rulfo, and Gabriel García Márquez being the authors most often cited. Here, Magical Realism issues from an alternative world view one might call ‘primitive’—whether it is that of voodoo practitioners, Guatemalan Indians, or villagers from the Mexican and Columbian hinterlands. The emphasis is anthropological and regional, but what lies behind this is the suggestion of a continental Latin American identity.

This last sentence picks up on an additional significant characteristic of Latin American magical realism. Besides functioning as a strategy of resistance, indigenous resources were utilized as a tool for the region’s self-definition. The autochthonous was a means through which to recuperate an alternative identity and culture, one which preceded the rupture of colonization. Chanady explains: “The Otherness of ‘primitive mentality’ [...] is appropriated by Latin American magical realists in their narrative strategies of identity construction [...]” In Carpentier’s *lo real*

maravilloso, for example, “the marvelous is presented as one of the main characteristics of the Latin American continent” (“Territorialization” 138). This usage, it must be underlined, is a constructive function, and one which links the mode with the related constructive function of regionalism and nation building, a potential use of magical realism later harnessed by Nigerian-British author Ben Okri in *The Famished Road*, as described in chapter two.

Latin American magical realism has been deployed both positively and negatively, both to construct and deconstruct. The appropriation of indigenous resources was simultaneously a strategy of resistance used to subvert Western empiricism, a negative gesture, and a search for an alternative (at times, superior) identity, a positive one. While these two strategies are distinct, they clearly work together in this phase of the mode. Moreover, they both contribute to a particularist view of magical realism, temporarily forging the perception of a necessary link between Latin America and magical realism. As the mode began to be recognized and developed beyond this region, though, critics had to alter their hermeneutical frameworks accordingly, paring down its perceived aesthetic requirements from bulky, unnecessary characteristics. Magical realism’s literary DNA could not be forced to encode either narrative elements such as a Latin American environment and indigenous myth or the extratextual criterion of Latin American authorship and politics once it was being successfully written by authors from Africa, India, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Yet, the Latin American magical realist strategy of resistance towards (neo)colonialists and other hegemonic forces could be (and was) transposed to those applications, which suggests why it is the deconstructionist strain which becomes a hallmark of the mode.¹⁵

There are two other possible reasons that Latin American magical realism would retain a

half legacy, its being remembered more in light of deconstruction rather than construction: Jorge Luis Borges and García Márquez.¹⁶ Arguably the mode's most famous patriarchs, both authors used magic subversively. The key predecessor of Latin American magical realism, Borges' "great theme" was "the illusory nature of knowledge itself," in Zamora's words ("Visualizing" 27). A couple of often referenced examples of subversion in García Márquez are located in his *One Hundred Years*: the narrative's questioning the limits of language in the insomnia plague and its undermining the veracity of official, historical records with the massacre of the banana workers. It should be pointed out, though, that because García Márquez also "territorialized" magic, his employment of the mode alternates between defensive and offensive strategies, negation (of reason) and creation (of regionalism).

As magical realist authorship expands from Latin Americans to postcolonial writers more generally, the use of narrative magic again vacillates between the two poles of deconstruction and construction. One point that becomes fixed with this stage, though, is magical realism's affiliation with a generally postcolonial poetics. Homi Bhabha exuberantly proclaims in *Nation and Narration* (1990): "'Magical realism' after the Latin American Boom, becomes the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world" (7). Rushdie claims magical realism as the expression of "a genuinely 'Third World' consciousness" (301). Timothy Brennan comments of magical realism that although it is most associated with Latin Americans, the mode is "actually a more general and inevitable outcome of mature post-colonial fiction" (*Salman* xii). Implied by Brennan, this development occurs as an issue needing to be defended when found outside Latin America. This is in spite of the fact that the international spread of the mode is justified by its earlier, transatlantic links. Nevertheless, as magical realism becomes firmly associated with postcoloniality, the location of birth from which authentic magical realist authorship can be

derived is likewise extended. During this phase of expansion, the mode maintains its association with resistance, a value that is, by itself, an offensive, negative one. At the same time, narrative magic tended to retain its link with indigenous mythological resources. This characteristic has the potential, as we have seen, for both a constructive functionality (for nationhood and identity) and a deconstructive one (in using non- or supra-rational worldviews to subvert Western epistemology).

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin include a definition of magical realism in their text, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, a fact that indicates the mode's having been circumscribed within a general postcolonial aesthetic. They explain that magical realism has come to refer to "the inclusion of any mythic or legendary material from local written or oral cultural traditions in contemporary narrative." According to the editors, these autochthonous resources are deployed for two ends: "The material so used is seen to interrogate the assumptions of Western, rational, linear narrative and to enclose it within an indigenous metatext, a body of textual forms that recuperate the pre-colonial culture" (132). The deconstructive use of myth to destabilize rationality is counterposed to its culturally constructive function.

The editors cite Jacques Stephen Alexis' 1956 essay, "Of the magical realism of the Haitians" (*Du réalisme merveilleux des Haïtiens*), as the moment when magical realism first extended beyond Latin American geo-political boundaries. As these editors also note, Alexis' description of magical realism weds postcolonial politics of resistance and self-definition to the autochthonous, and thereby continues the political deployment of magical realist aesthetics begun by Latin American authors: "Mythic and magical traditions, Alexis argued, [...] were the collective forms by which they gave expression to their identity and articulated their difference from the dominant colonial and racial oppressors" (132-33). Alexis looks to Haitian traditions,

especially those derived from African slaves, to define a unique national identity. Though at the same time, as will be seen in the following chapter, he also incorporates a form of humanism (traditionally associated with the West) into his theorizations, exhorting an interconnectedness among universal humanity.

Magical realism's overwhelming success at what Suzanne Baker calls a "postcolonial strategy" lies in its ability to be transposed to divergent contexts.¹⁷ In its aesthetic intermixture of realism/supernaturalism, the resource for supernaturalism is provided by indigenous mythology which is then inserted into reality, that is, both the extratextual world of socio-political history and hegemonic European realism. However, Ouyang has recently complained about this issue in critical hermeneutics: "Magic is [understood to be] derived from the 'supernatural' elements of 'local' or 'indigenous' myths, religions or cultures that speak directly to the imposition of Christianity in addition to post-Enlightenment empiricism on the 'natives' of South America" (16). The formulaic aspect of this usage of magical realism's two codes suggests how what was, for a time, a benefit, providing a politically and aesthetically compelling medium to reflect and reconstruct exploited and marginalized people groups, could subsequently become fatigued and reductive.

Expanding the authorial circle from both Latin American and postcolonial magical realists, we come to a group of authors who fit the category Timothy Brennan calls "Third-World Cosmopolitans." These are "literary celebrities from the Third World," writers born outside the metropolis, but who have come in the latter twentieth century to reside there and are associated with its values and aesthetics (viii-ix). They belong to the recent historical moment in which the mass migrations "in[to] England [...] from Africa, South Asia and the Caribbean, and in North America from Asia and Latin America" which occurred after World War II have reconstituted

the demographics and cultural composition of “the imperial ‘centers’” (*Salman* 6). This has contributed to the appearance of literatures written in English and marketed in English-speaking locales by authors of non-English origins. This “postcolonial migrant writing,” according to Elleke Boehmer, has grown up in close alliance with magical realism: “As things appear now, the proliferation of postcolonial migrant writing in English has become so closely linked to the runaway success of magic realism that the two developments appear almost inextricable” (*Colonial* 235). All three of the contemporaneous authors analyzed in this thesis, Nigerian-Londoner Okri, Indo-British-American Rushdie, and Cuban-American García can be situated within this category.

This phase has contributed to the deconstructive hermeneutical paradigm of magical realist aesthetics for a couple of reasons. As the Latin American phase demonstrated, the work of seminal authors is seen to define the mode. Jean-Pierre Durix, for example, uses a “prototype” approach to magical realism, defining the genre based on the paradigmatic novels of García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years* and Rushdie’s *Shame* and *Midnight’s Children* (116, 146). The most prominent author of the Third-World Cosmopolitan phase, Rushdie often employs in his narratives a playful, satirical tone, the most (in)famous example being his treatment of Islam in *The Satanic Verses*.¹⁸ Additionally, his celebration of hybridity, whereby he undermines notions of pure and hallowed culture, contributes to magical realism being seen as exclusively destabilizing.

Another reason deals with this group’s generally skeptical stance towards national projects. Brennan explains that with the Third-World Cosmopolitans, the terms of the decolonization struggle had changed. While for these authors’ predecessors nation building was a priority, the mass migrations of the 50s and 60s and the disheartening failures in decolonization with the

reinstatement of oppressive new regimes “have in a sense muted the national question [...]. In that way [Third-World Cosmopolitans] deny the old pattern of need to create a national mythos in the country of origin” (50). An additional key point of distinction between this new generation and earlier decolonization writers is their attitude towards the West. Third-World Cosmopolitans treat it as both “foil and lure.” They not only criticize it, but also depict it as the praiseworthy “receptacle of ‘democracy’” (52).

Insofar as Third-World Cosmopolitans are composed of magical realists, this phase of authorship diverges from the paradigms established thus far. The magical realists of this stage do, like their predecessors, utilize the mode to destabilize, but not in any simple rejection of the West, its empiricism and empire; the object of their interrogation includes the political projects of their home countries. This usage contrasts, as well, with the deployment of narrative magic to construct ancient roots for the nations of their birth, in short to construct nationalisms. Examples of this are located in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame*, novels that “problematize” India and Pakistan “at an existential level,” describes Brennan (*Salman* 64). In *Dreaming*, García evenhandedly critiques both the US and Cuban states. In contrast, while Okri can be seen to fit into this phase of authorship, his *Famished Road* trilogy urges an honorable Nigerian nationalism and “African Way,” if one that may never materialize on Earth.

Still, this change in terms of postcolonial political agendas goes a long way in describing the authors analyzed here. The novels in this study complicate the perception of magical realism as simply an anti-Western aesthetic that deploys its magic to deconstruct empire and empiricism. While the narrative magic of Okri’s and García’s novels does counter a naturalist or empirical worldview, offering a fuller depiction of the real, one which includes the supernatural, these novels also employ idea(l)s filiated with the West. Okri’s narrative recommends a humanist ethic

over and against the maligned occultism of the neocolonial politicians, turning any formula of indigenous magic versus Western paradigms on its head. Rushdie's *Enchantress*, instead of being poised against the West, uses the narrative's magical enchantress to bridge East and West, leveling Easterners and Westerners. Unlike García Márquez, Cristina García's magic is territorially unbounded, occurring in New York as easily as in Cuba. Furthermore, all three of these novels construct various strategies of belonging in the world, a usage that counterbalances the paradigm in which magical realist aesthetics are viewed as deconstructive only.

An offshoot of the postcolonial phase of authorship involves the recognition that magical realism can be written by Anglo authors from the "White Commonwealth," a notion which seemed, at first, contentious, reveals Slemon when he describes the development of English-Canadian magical realism as "perhaps the most startling development for magic realism in recent years, since Canada, unlike the other regions [Latin America, the Caribbean, India, and Nigeria], is not part of the Third World, a condition long thought necessary to the currency of the term in regard to literature" (407-08). This statement exemplifies how tightly wound has been magical realist aesthetics to extratextual political and identity issues, a phenomenon attributable, in large part, to how well magical realist aesthetics pair with this usage, its capacity for resistance becoming a rallying point for nationally diverse authors and critics.¹⁹ As Aldama notices, "Not surprisingly, writers and directors from across the globe who share common ethnosocial and political histories of marginalization and violent oppression gravitate toward this storytelling mode" (20).

Slemon seems to mitigate the controversial nature of the question of textual authenticity implicit in this widening of authorial parameters by contending that the Canadian magical realist texts he analyzes maintain the postcolonial thrust of Third World magical realist texts.²⁰ He

works explicitly to “place the concept [of magical realism] within the context of English-Canadian literary culture in its specific engagement with postcoloniality.” Furthermore, these literary works continue a resistance strategy, Slemon posits, in that they “tend to display a preoccupation with images of both borders and centers and to work toward destabilizing their fixity” (412).

At the same time, though, numerous magical realist narratives of this “White Commonwealth” stage continue the paradigm of integrating the autochthonous into their thematics, and so simultaneously function to generate ancient roots and alternative, or more inclusive identities. The novels of Canadian Robert Kroetsch (*What the Crow Said*) and Jack Hodgins (*The Invention of the World*) as well as US-Canadian Thomas King (*Green Grass, Running Water*) incorporate Canada’s Amerindian populations, in a similar way that New Zealander Janet Frame (*The Carpathians*) integrates the Maori and Australian David Malouf (*Remembering Babylon*) the Aboriginal.²¹

From this point, it is not a far step to extend the authorial parameters to include Anglo, First World authors, as Anne Hegerfeldt does in her *Lies That Tell the Truth: Magic Realism Seen Through Contemporary Fiction from Britain*. Hegerfeldt, as well as Angela Carter, perhaps the most renowned British-born magical realist author, defend the authenticity of this phase of magical realism in a gesture similar to that of the preceding group: they continue political solidarity with the postcolonial tradition of the mode. Carter aligns the politics of her magical realism with that of her predecessors by suggesting a comparison between feminism, which is central to her work such as *Nights at the Circus*, and decolonization. Writing at the age of forty-two, Carter describes herself in her twenties as “suffering a degree of colonization of the mind” because she would “unconsciously [...] posit a male point of view as a general one” (26). She

also perpetuates another Latin American paradigm whereby magic's necessary resource is ancient myth, while modifying it for a First World writer such as herself. In contrast to García Márquez or Rushdie, she comments:

In Britain one has to invent much more; we don't have an illiterate and superstitious peasantry with a very rich heritage of abstruse fictional material. But I realize that I tend to use other people's books, European literature, as though it were a kind of folklore. In *Nights at the Circus*, for example, the character Mignon is the daughter of Wozzeck – I'm more familiar with the opera by Berg than with the play – who is left playing at the end: she doesn't know what is going to happen. That is a reference to a common body of knowledge, a folklore of the intelligentsia. (82)

Setting the problematic tones of this statement aside, Carter is clearly cognizant of the Latin American and generally postcolonial paradigms for magical realism, both magic's (mythological) source and (political) effect.

Hegerfeldt acknowledges her need to justify her focus of study, British magical realists, because, as she points out, "endeavors to move magic realism away from the margins are anything but uncontroversial." She grants that "the mode is postcolonial," a quality which she seems to believe is inherent to the mode, not its particular usage or interpretation: "Regardless of the author's place of birth, magic realist fiction indeed is decidedly postcolonial in that it re-thinks the dominant Western world-view." By deploying the same techniques to the same end, she reasons, "Western writers may well participate in such a postcolonial project" (2-3).

In "re-thinking" the "Western world-view," Hegerfeldt evokes the poles of deconstruction and construction we have been following. The destabilization of Western ways of understanding and engaging with the world is for Hegerfeldt the definitive aspect of magical realism, and it is by this criterion that she determines the mode to be a singularly postcolonial aesthetic. However, Hegerfeldt also suggests the possibility of magical realists conveying alternative worldviews:

Using an ensemble of literary techniques, magic realist fiction insists that the concept of reality cannot be confined to the empirically perceivable. Rather, people's multiple ways

of perceiving and constructing their world must be acknowledged as real, for insofar as these fundamentally influence actions and decisions, they have significant repercussions on the level of social and material reality. In rendering metaphors, stories, dreams or magical beliefs real on the level of the text, magic realist fiction re-evaluates modes of knowledge production generally rejected within the dominant Western paradigm. (3)

While she allows, then, the mode to encompass both functions, Hegerfeldt's hermeneutics are limited in that she approaches magical realism with a pre-determined framework, one which necessarily views all magical realist texts as being opposed to Western epistemology and married to a postcolonial political aim. She does not make a distinction between successful usages, such as magical realism's historical postcolonial function, and necessary usages of the mode, nor between well-written subversive texts and those simply mimicking a formula that proves saleable.

A marked development occurs in magical realist theory when critics begin to recognize the mode's postmodernist affinities and draw attention to the way magical realism deploys postmodern techniques to ends compatible with its long-established postcolonial political usages. At this stage, the authorial circle is expanded wide enough to include any writer/text resistant towards tyranny, whether that be generic realism, Western empiricism, and/or a totalitarian regime. While postcolonialism and postmodernism depart from each other in many instances, they converge in magical realism in this way, a point which underlines the way that all three of these isms have grown up alongside each other in the mid to late twentieth century. During literary magical realism's Latin American and international flowerings, postcolonialism and postmodernism have been predominant ideological movements, critical hermeneutics, and aesthetic influences.

Faris identifies magical realism as "an important component of postmodernism" (163), exhibiting "postmodern fictional strategies" such as performativity, metafictionality, and shifting

references (175-77, 181). In her evaluation, magical realism continues to deploy the supra-rational to destabilize Western hegemony, but she recasts this tactic in postmodern terms. First, narrative magic does not require an indigenous resource. She gives the example of Francine Prose's novel *Bigfoot Dreams* which relies upon "tabloid writing" as a magical realist resource. This seems characteristic of recent instances of magical realism, she argues: "They are urban, 'first world,' mass cultural analogues of the primitive belief systems that underlie earlier Latin American examples of magical realism" (182-83).

Second, the combination of narrative magic with realism retains in Faris's postmodern evaluation its effect of political resistance; however, this is not aimed exclusively towards a colonizing force, but towards all "totalitarian regimes":

These texts, which are receptive in particular ways to more than one point of view, to realistic *and* magical ways of seeing, and which open the door to other worlds, respond to a desire for narrative freedom from realism, and from a univocal narrative stance; they implicitly correspond textually in a new way to a critique of totalitarian discourses of all kinds. ("Scheherazade" 179-80)

On the structural-symbolic level, plurality (represented by magic and realism) disrupts univocality and its homogenizing view of the world (represented by realism). This effects an "ontological disruption" which, in turn, "serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption," writes Faris together with Zamora ("Introduction" 3).

These descriptions of magical realism's postmodern politics suggest that the mode functions both defensively and offensively. Its shattering of univocality demonstrates the politics of resistance through deconstruction, destabilization, and negation. However, Faris also hints here at an ontological, inventive alternative when she writes that "magical ways of seeing [...] open the door to other worlds" ("Scheherazade" 180). Faris's concepts regarding this aspect will be explored more fully later.

Importantly, in her evaluation Faris expands the political function of magical realism from being exclusively postcolonial to being generally counter-hegemonic. Read in conjunction with Hegerfeldt's description of the perceived "political incorrectness" of opening magical realism up beyond a strict postcolonial framework, Faris's move is both polemical and illuminating. By including so-called First World texts, she frees magical realism from a strict postcolonialist politic based on the dichotomy of colonizer/colonized, and in this way compares to the Third-World Cosmopolitans. However, Faris's grouping differs from theirs in that part of the saliency and popularity of the Third-World Cosmopolitans derives from the (postcolonial) nations of their birth. While Faris views magical realism's postmodernist politics as working in tandem with its postcolonialist objectives, she still distinguishes among them in the very move through which she unites them. In this way she intimates that magical realist aesthetics and magical realist politics are not the same thing. In other words, magical realism as a literary mode need not be restricted to postcolonial politics, even if this has been key to the mode's development. This gesture is important for magical realism's genealogy, for with it Faris is able to incorporate and make sense of the significant contributions to magical realism made by the "poetics of subversion" found in Milan Kundera (*Kniha Smíchu a Zapomnění*, or *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* [1978] and *Nesnesitelná lehkost byti*, or *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* [1984]) and Grass (*The Tin Drum*)—from whom Rushdie drew—as well as D. M. Thomas (*The White Hotel*) and others (179). It creates space for a critical understanding of the mode that is appropriately broad and complex, one that is more consistent with magical realism's diverse history.

Like Faris, Theo D'haen also contends for the relationship between magical realism and postmodernism, yet his argument aligns more closely to Hegerfeldt's than to Faris's, for he

suggests magical realism is the postcolonially inclined part of postmodernism, functioning to “decenter privileged centers”: “It is precisely the notion of the ex-centric, in the sense of speaking from the margin, from a place ‘other’ than ‘the’ or ‘a’ center, that seems to me an essential feature of that strain of postmodernism we call magic realism” (194). In D’haen’s estimation, then, magical realism is situated squarely in the parameters of a politics of resistance and destabilization.²²

The linking of magical realism with postmodernism is off-putting to some critics, and their complaints tend to involve bringing magical realism and postmodernism too closely together without a view of how they might also be distinguished. These objections reflect areas of conflict between the wider discourses of postmodernism and postcolonialism. Ouyang cites this as the perspective of Alfred J. López, who criticizes Rushdie’s magical realism as merely “postmodern historiography” which “writes history in a fragmentary, questioning and unreliable fashion all in response to colonial single-voiced, self-assured linear grand narrative” (18).²³ López’s view seems warranted to the extent that postmodernist critics interpret magical realist texts as nothing more than subversion. Warnes cites this as the reason why magical realism is mistakenly understood as functioning only as “ludic” and “irreverent” discourse: “So closely aligned with a postmodernist perspective has been so much literary criticism of magical realism, that its recuperative, realist aspects have been neglected” (16). Hegerfeldt affirms Warnes’ position when she describes what she sees as a common perspective in which “in the hands of First World writers [...] serious postcolonial critique becomes pure postmodern playfulness, ex-centricity a pose – in short, magic realism deteriorates into a cliché” (2).

Magical realism cannot and need not be collapsed with postmodernist deconstruction, though. As Brennan points out, Rushdie’s (as well as other Third-World Cosmopolitans’) use of

postmodernism “calls for a distinction between types of postmodernism.” These writers are on a different side of the “imperial process” and exhibit concern with issues such as “human tragedy,” “political villains,” “protest,” and “real history” which are “anomalous” to European and North American postmodernisms (139-42). In addition, the mode’s aesthetics allow narrative magic a range of functionality, both for construction and deconstruction.

The final authorial stage proves the most expansive of all and, consequently, also the most polemical. In *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel* (2009) Warnes spends time moving backwards in magical realism’s genealogy, focusing on the theoretical links among early, pre-Latin American theorists: Novalis, Roh, Jünger, and Bontempelli. By exploring this lineage Warnes makes a significant contribution to magical realist criticism and specifically to this study because through it he asserts an important, if highly contentious point, one which seems to fly in the face of the developments which have been traced so far. Not only does he demonstrate that early magical realism had a constructive function, but also that it utilized this function to buttress dubious right-wing political agendas.

According to Warnes’ genealogy, the common thread running throughout these early usages is the reconciliation of seemingly contradictory concepts: “In each of the cases of Novalis, Roh, Jünger and Bontempelli, the term magical realism carries the burden of resolving the antinomy between two realms that usually exclude one another” (29). This is the same basic idea that resurfaces later in Latin American and global embodiments, he describes, when it is used as a literary aesthetic “in which magical and realistic elements co-exist with equal ontological status” (20). According to Warnes, Jünger employed Roh’s term to “reconcil[e] technology with the traditionalist tendencies in German nationalism” (27). In this context, Jünger mobilized magical realism for the “militant pursuit of cultural definition.” Bontempelli is another “reactionary” who

was “attracted by the term magical realism.” He was seeking “a new mythography” to reconcile “continuities between past and present” and the “miracles in the midst of ordinary and everyday life.” Problematically, though, Bontempelli was, initially, a fascist sympathizer, an aspect Warnes does not expound upon (28).

Nevertheless, through these two figures Warnes widens the authorial circle in such a way that magical realism’s genealogy now includes authors from antithetical political positions.²⁴ He shows that the politics associated with the term need not be, nor have historically been, tied only to liberationist, leftist motivations, but might just as easily be deployed by ideologies from the political right:

There is no reason why the literary manifestations of these syntheses [the magical and the real] should automatically be considered innocent of such dangers. Just as the term magical realism can be used for a number of different purposes, so the mode of narration might also be harnessed to the cause of any range of possible political agendas.

Of course, Warnes does not promote such usages, but argues instead that “it is in its postcolonial incarnations that magical realism fulfils its creative and critical potential to the fullest.” Still, because of the capacity of magical realism to be deployed by divergent ideologies, he cautions, “claims about the politics of magical realism should be evaluated on a case by case basis” (28-29).

Warnes’ argument places him on the outskirts of the majority of magical realist criticism, but he is not completely alone. Helene Price implicitly confirms Warnes’ (subsequently written) argument in her literary analysis entitled “Unsavoury Representations in Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*.” Here she contends that Esquivel’s magical realist novel embodies a conservative ideology that goes against the grain of the “revolutionary ethos” of its textual counterparts. “Esquivel’s employment of elements of magic” is neither “transgressive” nor “subversive,” Price argues, but “reinforce[s] the ‘traditional’ boundaries of gender, race, and

class.” Moreover, Esquivel’s novel “differs from the majority of other magical-realist narratives in that it is not intrinsically postcolonial” (181-82). This leads Price to conclude that *Like Water for Chocolate* is magical realist in “style rather than in substance” (190). Important for the critical sequences traced in this section, though, is that Price does not conclude that Esquivel’s novel is not magical realism because it opposes the predominant politics of many magical realists and their critical counterparts.

Whether or not one agrees with Price’s reading, it is significant that her argument, like Warnes’, is antithetical to the deconstructive paradigm which views the mode as inherently counter-hegemonic. The critical position represented by Hegerfeldt and D’haen applies an *a priori* hermeneutical lens, approaching magical realist texts with an always already predetermined political interpretation. This methodology cannot reconcile, and must therefore disregard, instances which do not conform to a subversive politic, the result being a politically homogenous criticism which is not able to engage with the full range of texts and textual instances employing this aesthetic.

Defining the Mode

When the modal characteristics of magical realism are confused with particular deployments of it, extratextual factors which may or may not be reflected in a given narrative, critical registers are correspondingly limited, as has been discussed. However, the codes of magic and realism can be employed to effect a range of outcomes, some quite “unsavory” as Price and Warnes demonstrated. Arriving at this position, though, one which makes a distinction between magical realism’s literary DNA and the ideological alignment affiliated with particular texts, requires a clear understanding of magical realism’s minimal aesthetic requirements.

I will begin exploring the question of appropriate modal demarcation by referring first to Warnes because his ability to trace magical realism's comprehensive, internally conflicted lineage is due to his defining the mode broadly enough to include its contrary usages. Warnes identifies equivalence as the common structural trait among magical realism's various flowerings. Initially, with the rudimentary incarnations he recounts, magical realism is used to encompass any "two realms that usually exclude one another."²⁵ These parameters are too broad to be of any practical use, though, a point of which he seems aware, for he modifies this in the definition which he himself uses, clarifying that the two realms put on equal footing must be that of the natural and supernatural: "A basic definition of magical realism, then, sees it as a mode of narration that naturalizes or normalizes the supernatural; that is to say, a mode in which real and fantastic, natural and supernatural, are coherently represented in a state of equivalence. On the level of the text neither has a greater claim to truth or referentiality" (3).

Ato Quayson also makes equivalence the centerpiece of his definition:

[...] magical realism is first and foremost a literary mode in which equivalence is established between the code of the real and that of the magical. In this definition the real stands for the pragmatic and ordinary sense of everyday life as most people experience it and the magical is an umbrella term to denote elements drawn from mythology, fantasy, folk tales, and any other discourse that bears a representational code opposed to realism. But the central term of this working definition is the notion of equivalence. Equivalence is discernible in relation to the disposition of various elements such that there is no explicit hierarchy between the main discourses, whether magical or real. ("Magical" 164)

Equivalence does explain a couple of crucial elements within magical realism. It describes the mode's structure which encompasses the simultaneous presence of two separate codes, the magical and the real, codes which never "merge" into one, as Robert Wilson explains. They are "co-present" so that "it seems as if two systems of possibility have enfolded each other: two kinds of cause and effect, two kinds of organism, two kinds of consequence [...], and two kinds

of time and space” (70-72). Equivalence also describes a hallmark technique of magical realism, the moment of fusion when narrative magic is put on the level of the mundane.²⁶ This occurs when supernatural events are described in a deadpan manner while, in contrast, ordinary objects such as ice are described as wondrous, as in *One Hundred Years*. In such textual instances, the reversal of magic and the mundane does effect something like an equivalence of the two codes. This is what Warnes seems to be pointing to when he explains that magical realism “naturalizes” and “normalizes” the supernatural.

Still, neither these textual moments nor the hybrid structure of magical realism can necessarily be extrapolated to describe the way narrative magic functions in relation to the rest of the textual web or to extratextual issues. The language of equivalence is, therefore, laden with misleading connotations when employed to delimit the mode. It suggests a specific kind of relationship or interaction among the two codes of magic and reality, the natural and supernatural, one which does not apply in all cases, as I will show in the next section.

Instead of equivalence, I recommend preferable, alternative vocabulary for definition and description, terms which do not imply a particular kind of relationship between the two codes, but merely their co-existence: David Young and Keith Hollaman’s “duality” (2); Wilson’s “dual-worldness” and “plural worldhood” (72); Chanady’s “bidimensionality” (7); or Deandrea’s “cohabitation” (32).²⁷ The substitution of any of these terms in Warnes’ theorizations would not diminish the significant arguments he develops, but instead allows them to retain the expansive space he strives to carve out. Still, while these terms work well as abbreviated explanations of magical realist aesthetics, they are insufficient as complete definitions. For this, I (re)turn to Chanady’s three-part definition published in 1985.²⁸ The text must contain two antinomious codes: “Magical realism is thus characterized first of all by two conflicting, but autonomously

coherent, perspectives, one based on an ‘enlightened’ and rational view of reality, and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality” (22). Furthermore, unlike the fantastic which problematizes the presence of the supernatural, the “resolution of logical antinomy in the description of events and situations is our second criterion for the existence of magical realism” (25-26). Related to the last two, the third criterion insists upon an “authorial reticence, or absence of obvious judgments about the veracity of the events and the authenticity of the world view expressed by characters in the text” (*Magical* 30).

Chanady’s definition is beneficial not only because it distinguishes magical realism from its literary near relatives—the fantastic, fairy tale, the uncanny, science-fiction, the marvelous, the pseudo-fantastic, and popular legend—but also because of its capacity to demarcate the mode while allowing it to retain enough room to include an array of texts, and thus offer a useful category.²⁹ For example, one will notice that the two instances mentioned above when equivalence does explain magic and realism’s interaction are encompassed by Chanady’s tripartite definition. The structural equivalence of two codes can be located within Chanady’s first condition, and the moment of fusion when the supernatural is related as natural evokes Chanady’s second criterion, resolved antinomy. However, Chanady does not use language that would restrict to equivalence all instances when the codes of magic and the real interact, whether that be in a given textual moment or in relation to a narrative’s overall thematics. Instead, she simply describes the two codes as “autonomously coherent” (*Magical* 22). This is vital, for it allows the mode to be transposed into diverse environments and political ideologies. Her definition and formalist approach transcend the requirement of particular usages.

Establishing a framework for an inter-American study of magical realism, Shannin Schroeder praises Chanady’s definition along similar lines: “Magical realism, as defined by scholars like

Amaryll Chanady, proves to be universal, a code that defies limitations of geography, generation, and language” (1). However, her praise of this definition’s universality seems to go a little too far, and raises one way that Chanady’s definition is limited. Reeds observes that Chanady’s “separation of the fantastic and magical realism” depends upon a “cultural basis”: “For magical realism to function the reader had to see magical events as supernatural and this presupposes his or her vision coming from Western empiricism” (190). Chanady distinguishes between the natural and supernatural and its resolved antinomy based on the “rational” worldview of the reader. In this way, as with any literary definition, hers is neither purely aesthetic nor purely universal.

At the same time, though, this issue can be resolved by this key distinction. It is the formal conventions of magic, or the supernatural, and realism that establish a given text as magical realist. An author (most often) self-consciously employs, often toying with, these codes’ signifying attributes, such as realism’s historical grounding and care for detail alongside the supernatural which is related with a “brick face,” as García Márquez refers to this crucial magical realist technique (“Art” 188). A reader who believes in the supernatural will therefore recognize the presence of these textual conventions (i.e. realism) and their violation in a narrative (be that written or filmed), and is unlikely to mistake the text for the real world.

Thus far, we have followed how perceptions of magical realism’s capacity to construct and/or deconstruct change alongside the expanding perception of authentic authorship. This groundwork highlights the way that magical realism’s successful and significant utilizations have at times been mistaken for the poetics of the mode itself. From this point, the question of a minimalist aesthetic requirement, or definition, for the mode arose. Based on an appropriately flexible explanatory terminology as well as Chanady’s three-part definition, one can remove

magical realism from underneath any one particular overlay, such as the postcolonial and postmodernist politics of resistance from which the mode seems almost inseparable today. It then becomes apparent that magical realism's literary DNA might be employed for diverse, even conflicting usages.

Three Magical Realist Modi Operandi

After one has assessed that a text meets the minimal modal criteria and might, therefore, usefully be analyzed within the magical realist framework, a second layer of meaning is determined through interrogating the way that the co-existing codes of magic and realism interact with each other and with the other narrative elements. Based on my survey of numerous magical realist critics, this might take on any one or a combination of three *modus operandi*: subversion, suspension, and summation.³⁰ First, magic works to subvert realism and its representative worldview. Second, magic and realism are suspended between each other disjunctively. Third, magic functions summationally towards reality/realism: it adds to it. One can determine which one(s) of these are at play in a text by interrogating the narrative with questions such as how does the magic function in relation to its realist counterpart, and vice versa? How do the two codes correspond with the text's other narrative elements, aspects such as characterization and narration, as well as in relation to the entire narrative web? Concerning the text's production, how is the narrative and its author responding to the historical milieu? This range of possibilities represented in these (at least) three modes of operation not only offers greater precision when critically positioning a magical realist text, but it also suggests the broad potential of the mode, the diverse ways in which the codes of magic and realism might be made to interact.

The first mode of operation includes instances when narrative magic performs the role of the heroic agent of subversion. This does not mean that magic need be a character but that, according

to a text's thematics and extratextual referents, the destabilization accomplished by the irreducible element is interpreted as functioning in a protagonist's role and/or in cooperation with the protagonist(s). An example of this subversive *modus operandi* is García Márquez's short story, "Light is Like Water" ("*La luz es como el agua*"). This narrative features two boys, Totó and Joel, who have moved with their parents to Spain from Cartagena de Indias. The boys demonstrate a capacity to surpass their Spanish classmates in academics—they win the prestigious Gold Gardenia Prize—and in the ability to navigate through the magical ocean of light with which they fill their apartment. One night, when the boys and their classmates generate too much liquid light in the apartment, all thirty-seven of Totó and Joel's friends drown, while they themselves remain perfectly intact. The reason for the brothers' survival in contrast to their Spanish peers is alluded to in the closing sentence: "In Madrid, Spain, a remote city of burning summers and icy winds, with no ocean or river, whose landbound indigenous population had never mastered the science of navigating on light" (161).

Characteristic of magical realism, several binaries are unsettled here: light becomes water, navigating this magical substance is compared to science, and the Columbian boys achieve "master[y]" in contrast to their Spanish counterparts. They prove superior to the "indigenous" Spaniards not only in academics but in the magical domain as well. In this story, the code of magic is represented by the liquid light and Totó and Joel's capacity to navigate it. The code of the real is signaled in the text by the historical city names, the detailed location of the boys' home—the "fifth floor apartment at 47 Paseo de la Castellana" (157), and the policemen who arrive at the scene of the tragedy. The realism within the text, in turn, evokes extratextual issues related to colonization, a fact signaled by the words *indigenous* ("*aborígenes*" in the Spanish) and *mastery* (or masters, "*maestros*") as well as the locations of the two cities, Madrid and

Cartagena de Indias, the latter of which is a city on the northern, Caribbean coast of Columbia named by a Spanish conquistador after Cartagena, Spain. It is the magical code, however, that works the inversion of the historical colonialist binary of indigenous/masters within the narrative. In this short story, then, narrative magic works in conjunction with the protagonists, Colombians Totó and Joel, as well as with the historico-political appeal to postcolonial values encompassed in the subversion of the alleged superiority of the Old World.

This story is illustrative of the subversive *modus operandi*, for in this specific interfacing of the codes of the magical and the real, the former code undermines the latter. Critics extrapolate the textual subversion enacted by the two codes to extratextual circumstances, namely the opposition to (neo)colonization and all forms of hegemony. As will be clear by now, the subversive *modus operandi* includes the postcolonial and postmodernist magical realist frameworks already detailed and is the one for which the mode is most renowned. Though, importantly, as the terms of the postcolonial debate continue to change over time, as seen with the Third-World Cosmopolitans, this paradigm has become dated and adapted. As we will see, Okri inverts it in *Famished* when magic is identified with corrupt Nigerian politicians over and against the novel's humanist protagonists.

In the second *modus operandi*, the codes magic and realism are “suspended” between each other. This is the language Slemon uses to describe the interaction among magical realism's two codes. Preceding Warnes and Quayson, he begins to suggest the foundation of formal equivalence: “Although most works of fiction are generally mixed in mode, the characteristic maneuver of magic realist fiction is that its two separate narrative modes never manage to arrange themselves into any kind of hierarchy” (410). He moves beyond this point, however, to make a judgment about the effects of this co-modal state:

In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the 'other,' a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences. (409)

This disjunctive suspension appears not only on a structural level, but is also reflected within the magical realist text's thematics and the socio-political factors surrounding the text's production. Slemon explains that the "gaps, absences, and silences" rendered by the "language of narration" he refers to above parallel those "produced by the colonial encounter" (411-12).³¹ He shows, for example, how "Kroetsch's technique for foregrounding gaps and silences of the dispossessed in *What the Crow Said*" involves depicting "constricting binaries, a thematic equivalent to the dialectic operative in the language of narration" (418).

The third magical realist *modus operandi* is summation. The term *summation* is meant to evoke the idea of adding. In this case, magic adds to or builds upon the realistic world. It is compatible with, or works alongside, reality in some way, while at the same time suggesting that a naturalist worldview is lacking.³² Zamora underscores this as an essential paradox of magical realism: "Contemporary magical realists write *against* the illusionism of narrative realism by heightening their own narrative investment in illusion" ("Magical" 500-01). Though, it should be clarified that in the category of summation the "illusion" magical realists deploy as a technique in the text implies something more than illusion in the real world, but a wider scope of reality. This is precisely how Isabel Allende explains the mode:

Magic realism is a literary device or a way of seeing the world in which there is space for the invisible forces that move the world: dreams, legends, myths, emotion, passion, history. All these forces find a place in the absurd, unexplainable aspects of magic realism. [...] It is the capacity to see and to write about all the dimensions of reality. (qtd. in Faris, "Scheherazade" 187-88)³³

Magical realism suggests external reality is a domain in which unseen aspects, not only empirically sensed ones, render significant effects. Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* exemplifies this when Sethe becomes haunted by her deceased child, a situation made all the worse because entangled with the horrific crimes of slavery. While the haunting is actually occurring in the narrative, on a metaphorical level Beloved's ghostly reappearance might be seen as representing the way that Sethe continues to experience the trauma of losing her daughter, long after her daughter has died.

Resonating with Allende, Scott Simpkins suggests that instead of viewing magical realism as a departure from realism, one could see this aesthetic as the attempt to get closer to it.³⁴ Simpkins uses the word *supplement* to refer to the way magical realists use narrative magic to provide what is lacking in the linguistic signification of realist texts. Thus, magic functions as a "corrective gesture" to the mimetic failures of realism. While in Simpkins' estimation this is an impossible reach because "the *thing itself* always slips away," a view not universally held, his concept is still crucial in the way it underscores magical realists' desire to move closer than realist authors to representing reality (153-54).

The concept of summation is evoked when Wilson points to instances where the magical code comes into contact with the real through "emergence":

[...] one world may lie hidden within another. Then the hybrid construction emerges from a secret already contained within, forming an occulted and latent aspect of the surface world. [...] This pattern of the one world waiting secretly within the other seems too apparent to miss: the hybrid construction, then, is always already present. (72)

Magic's always already presentness invites the reader to adopt, if only for the duration of the narrative, an amplified view of reality, one in which magic might at any moment "emerge" out of the real. This notion is echoed in Faris when she describes: "Very briefly, magical realism combines realism and the fantastic in such a way that magical elements grow organically out of

the reality portrayed” (“Scheherazade” 163). As magic “emerges” or “grows” out of the real, it is not antithetical or destructive to reality, but compatible with it. Though, this does not prevent narrative magic from wreaking a bit of havoc, for, often, through it “normal notions about time, place, identity, matter and the like are challenged,” as Young and Hollaman warn (2).³⁵

These critical descriptions make apparent how this third *modus operandi* of summation contrasts with the category of suspension. While, according to Slemon, suspension renders textual voids, summation generates abundance. It creates and constructs. This application of magical realism in its capacity for construction also clearly contrasts with the use of magic to deconstruct various frameworks, though both utilizations might be present in the same text. In García’s *Dreaming*, for example, narrative magic works to undermine trust in paternalistic, official records of History while, in conjunction, suggesting an alternative means through which the past might be carried forward, a feminine, familial magic that links women down through succeeding generations.

The summational capacity of magical realism responds in a particular way to Zamora’s enjoinder of critics to consider the role that the magical object plays in magical realism. She contends that because of magical realism’s history in the visual arts with Roh and his emphasis on the object,

we would do well, [...] to review the itinerary of the term and reconsider its visual lineage. I say this because it seems to me that texts accurately referred to as “magical realist” do raise questions about the nature of visual representation, and the nature of objects represented, as realistic texts do not. Of course, all works of literature require that we visualize objects and settings, but objects and settings in realistic works are generally asked to represent only themselves. (22)

She moves from this point to compare and contrast the similar interest in “the counterrealistic potential of the realistic representation” among Roh and Borges (“Visualizing” 27). While this is not my task, I recall Zamora’s appeal because it anticipates my concern with the functional range

of narrative magic. Insofar as the mode is used as summation, the magical object can function as presence: it makes present in reality some aspect found missing by materializing it, magically, within the realist code carefully constructed by the text. This is usefully juxtaposed with the way magic interacts with the real in the critically popular first *modus operandi*, as a subversive agent, as well as the second, to render textual voids. While in all cases, magic is visible to the readers, and in this way is impossible to ignore, their tasks are different within the narrative nexuses.

There are specific aspects that narrative magic might build within the real when it is used in this summational mode. Magic can construct, or present, within the real any one or combination of the following: spiritual dimensions, elements of nationhood, cultural aspects, and strategies of belonging. Quayson has drawn attention to magical realism's ability to construct spirit dimensions, a function he describes as the mode's "replenishing" of realism's limited metaphysical register. According to him, this is the result of a specifically African magical realism.³⁶ In the mode's continuation of African genres of orality, which "retain a comfortable relationship to magical elements in the constitution of a cognitive response to the world," African magical realist narratives "establish the essential porousness of what might be taken as reality" (160, 175). As a result, these texts "imbue, reshape, and ignite a sense of enchantment in a world that appears to be singularly disenchanted and dull" ("Magical" 175). In his account, then, African magical realism weaves into the fabric of "disenchanted" reality a spirit domain.

Remystification is the word Faris had previously chosen to describe a similar concept, and one referring to a capacity present in all magical realist narratives by virtue of the mode itself. In her *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, Faris argues that "[...] magical realism would constitute a latent tendency to include a spirit-based element within contemporary literature—a possible remystification of narrative in the West" (65). Her use of the

word “include” signals that the relationship of magic to its realist counterpart is one of adding. In both these senses, Quayson’s replenishment and Faris’s remystification, magical realism is performing as summation in that it builds a spirit dimension into realism’s mimetic framework. Though, for Quayson it is the world that is replenished by narrative—this is a metaphysical change—while for Faris magical realism remystifies contemporary Western narrative and, potentially, its criticism.

Faris supports her internationalist argument based on magical realist aesthetics, which do not require specific geographical or thematic parameters. While certain texts may include “thematic treatments of connections to spirit worlds,” Faris contends, “it is the narrative mode of magical realism itself” that creates a space for mystery and spirit “in the way it includes the irreducible elements within realism” (74). It is the interworking of the mode’s two codes that enable it to construct a sacred space. Within the realist code, narrative magic “encodes the ineffable.” However, this aspect of magical realism has been excluded from critical treatment, she argues, because of critical bias: “And it is this [...] that has been the most neglected because it is the most alien to the modern Western critical tradition. [...] That hostility dictates that if the presence of a realm of the spirit exists in magical realist fictions, it may often go largely unseen by the conscious writing and reading mind” (*Ordinary* 68-69).

While Faris focuses on magical realist aesthetics, Warnes underscores magical realism’s construction of spirit domains through its inclusion of alternative, religious worldviews. In this way, his point is similar to Quayson’s, though Warnes contends magical realism might achieve this function with any alternative worldview, not only an African one. Warnes argues that the construction of specific ontologies is the function of “faith-based” magical realism. These authors appropriate indigenous worldviews in order to “legitimiz[e] alternative, participatory

realities” (12). Okri makes this point explicitly about his novel studied in the following chapter: “I’m looking at the world in *The Famished Road* from the inside of the African world view, but without its being codified as such.” For this reason, because the narrative imaginatively reconstructs how an African with this worldview would perceive reality, according to Okri, he claims that the narrative is “a kind of realism, but a realism with many more dimensions” (“Ben” 337-38).³⁷ Warnes points to another, earlier text, Asturias’ *Men of Maize* (*Hombres de Maíz*), positing it as “probably the most developed example of an ontological, faith-based magical realism in existence” in its encyclopedic anthropological treatment of Aztec and Mayan resources such as the myths found in the Maya-Quiché *Popol Vuh* (48).³⁸ Like Faris, Warnes notes that critical bias has overlooked or ignored this element of the mode, though he specifically cites the predominant hermeneutical lenses of critics as the cause: “So closely aligned with a postmodernist perspective has been so much literary criticism of magical realism, that its recuperative, realist aspects have been neglected” (16). This last point demonstrates why critical parameters need expanding, so the potential range of narrative magic’s functionality can come into view.

Echoing Chanady, Ouyang proposes that magical realism can function to construct national identities. Drawing from Eric Hobsbawm’s and Benedict Anderson’s nation theory, she suggests that the return of postcolonial authors to native traditions is a means of imagining community:

In the process of its decolonization it [postcolonial contemporary literature] ‘invents a tradition’ the contours of which are delineated by the borders of the nation-state. [...] This ‘invented tradition’ is akin to the ‘immemorial past’ Anderson identifies as the historical dimension in ‘imaginings of community’ within the framework of nationalism. (17-18)

Magical realists’ use of indigenous resources for the supernatural, she asserts, provides just such an instance of this.

Asturias' and Carpentier's excavation of indigenous resources, Amerindian and Afro-Caribbean, is clearly used to buttress regionalism and nationalism, as Chanady's scholarship has shown. This function also brings to mind the early, pre-Latin American uses of magical realism, if suspect forms of it, which Warnes described. Without getting into moral differences involved here, both involve the usage of the mode for constructing nationhood/nationalism.

The summational capabilities of magical realism can be used to (re)construct cultural aspects.³⁹ Faris comments on this function, while hinting at the interrelatedness of magical realism's national and cultural constructions:

Magical realism has become so important as a mode of expression worldwide, especially in postcolonial cultures, because it has provided the literary ground for significant cultural work; within its texts, marginal voices, submerged traditions, and emergent literatures have developed and created masterpieces. (Faris, *Ordinary* 1)

Certainly, postcolonial realist texts have also performed cultural work. Mark Mathuray explains this as a key aspect of both Chinua Achebe's writing and of African literary realism⁴⁰:

[...] one may note a certain archival tendency in Achebe's "historical" texts—and in African literary realism in general—to collect, catalogue, and store within the realm of fiction those aspects of culture that have been obliterated or are under threat of being engulfed by the tides of history. (51)

While this task is not unique to magical realism, though, magical realism uniquely executes a cultural function. It does not limit its cultural detailing to a naturalist or ethnographic view but also incorporates, visually and thematically, supernatural events and beliefs. These must be accepted by the reader as actually occurring. In this way, magical realism presents both material and supra-material cultural aspects. In another Nigerian text, *The Famished Road*, Okri's depiction of the abikus Azaro and Ade are examples of this expansive form of social representation. Okri does not merely describe this Yoruba myth, but actually dramatizes this belief in its characterization and plot. This draws into question significant issues about magical

realism's complex relationship to mimesis, its representation of reality as well as its realist conventions, an issue which needs to be explored more fully. It also illustrates the way that magical realism is specially positioned to recuperate and present alternate, cultural worldviews, particularly ones that have been lost through colonization.

Cultural recuperation is not the only means by which narrative magic might carry out cultural work. Among other possibilities, Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* has made famous the ability of the mode to magically dramatize issues related to the hybridization of culture. In a related sense, *Dreaming*'s Cuban-American Pilar Puente represents the adaptation of culture in that while supernaturally connected with her Abuela Celia in Cuba, she must negotiate her cultural heritage and the mutations that it inevitably undergoes. Again, this demonstrates the way postcolonial tasks have changed over time.

Finally, magical realism can be used to construct strategies of belonging, as do all three of the novels analyzed here.⁴¹ This is the specific function generated by the interfacing of magic and realism that will be explored at length in the subsequent chapters. An interrogation of Okri, Rushdie, and García's uses of narrative magic, for example, reveals the way that in each of these novels the magical code intimately corresponds with the narrative's depiction of how characters do (and do not) derive senses of belonging in the (real) world. These narratives utilize this capacity in different ways, though, demonstrating the flexibility of the mode even within this singular analytical subset.

In *Famished* (chapter two), a novel suffused with the supernatural, there are myriad ways that narrative magic paradoxically enacts an elevation of the human domain, and thus the code of realism. In this humanist orientation of the natural and supernatural planes, *Famished* extends a strategy of belonging in which the narrative's protagonists achieve the fullness of being and

belonging as they learn to give their first loyalty to their natal attachments while actively opposing any spiritual and/or political beings who are antagonistic to those ties. *Dreaming* (chapter three) dramatizes the inescapable and vital role the family nexus plays in belonging. In this narrative, magic often emphasizes the bonds of family, as is seen in Jorge's ghostly appearance to his daughter Lourdes as well as Celia and Pilar's telepathic communication with each other. In Rushdie's *Enchantress* (chapter four) a dangerous particularism defines the means of belonging exhibited by most of the characters from both Florence and Sikri. An exception to these figures is the Mughal princess referred to in the novel's title. Qara Kōz is an enchantress who exerts her powers to escape such a narrow-minded existence, illustrating a form of cosmopolitan exile, though she is almost killed as a result. A crucial use of magic in *The Enchantress*, then, is its depiction of a choice in belonging between a closed-minded adherence to communities of descent and a hazardous, if liberated, lifestyle wherein one chooses one's own attachments.⁴²

That magical realism can be used to present different strategies of belonging is consistent with the broader history of the mode. For example, Latin American and postcolonial magical realists' interlacing of the codes of magic and realism to assert regional, national, and cultural identities suggests a particular strategy of belonging in the world, one defined by locality. Also key within this phase, the dramatization of indigenous magic recommends that it is through (romanticized) "native" roots that one finds one's place among the world in the present. In contrast to this view, others have combined the magical and the real to depict a type of palimpsestic belonging, one that is multiple. This is the kind Aldama focuses on in his study of magical realism as a rubric for Anglophone postcolonial and ethnic literature, those filmmakers and authors who have "juxtaposed the 'real' and the 'unreal' to imagine the identities formed out

of a living-here-belonging-elsewhere phenomenon” (ix). It is this use of magical realism that has been made famous by Rushdie in his novels preceding *Enchantress*, as I submit in chapter four.

Significantly, the spiritual, political, and cultural concerns made manifest in summational magical realist texts might be seen as intersecting at this single concern, how people develop senses of belonging in the world. The spiritual reaches for affiliations with the transcendent, while the political and cultural are sources of belonging found in this world. Nevertheless, in all of these ways magical realism uses its magical code in conjunction with reality, presenting various elements within it using the summational *modus operandi*.

Belonging, Translocation, and Cosmopolitan Maps

What kind of concern is belonging? In a general sense, belonging is an issue one imagines all people have faced in various degrees. I mean to create narrower parameters than this. As the backdrop of this study, belonging is an issue that has become pressing because of historico-political events involving translocation. Azade Sehyan describes “migration, dislocation, and translation” as “those deeply felt signs and markers of our age. The recent history of forced or voluntary migrations, massive transfers of population, and traveling and transplanted cultures is seen as part and parcel of the postwar, postindustrial, and postcolonial experience” (4). These historical realities have remapped the globe, restructuring both home and host countries in terms of geo-political boundaries, infrastructure, and demographics.

These events have inevitably sent reverberations throughout the social sphere, re-posing foundational questions to individuals and groups regarding identity, place, and interconnectedness. David Hollinger suggests this relationship between change and social self-conception when he predicts that solidarity, the sense of belonging experienced at the group level, will be a primary “challenge” of this century:⁴³

Just who belongs together with whom, and for what purposes, and on what authority? The answers to these basic issues in affiliation are not as obvious as they once seemed. Ascribed and taken-for-granted identities are being disrupted by a multitude of social transformations throughout the world, especially in the United States. The problem of solidarity is emerging as one of the central challenges of the twenty-first century. (ix)

The kind of social reorganization which Hollinger is focusing on in contemporary manifestations carries profound historical effects, as Hans Kohn posited over half a decade ago: “Important periods of history are characterized by the circumference within which the sympathy of man extends. These limits are neither fixed nor permanent, and changes in them are accompanied by great crises in history” (21).

This is the milieu apart from which the three authors analyzed here cannot be deeply understood. Though, clearly, their personal experiences with it differ dramatically from others because of class differences. Still, living contemporaries Rushdie, Okri, and García have each experienced these movements personally. Born in India, Nigeria, and Cuba, respectively, these authors moved in their youth to the North/West where they have since become permanent residents (and global celebrities). “Life on the hyphen” describes not only García as a Cuban-American, but all of them.⁴⁴

In 1982, Rushdie penned a string of questions:

What does it mean to be ‘Indian’ outside India? How can culture be preserved without becoming ossified? How should we discuss the change within ourselves and our community without seeming to play into the hands of our racial enemies? What are the consequences, both spiritual and practical, of refusing to make any concessions to Western ideas and practices? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas and practices and turning away from the ones that came here with us? These questions are all a single, existential question: How are we to live in the world? (*Imaginary* 17-18)

A passage such as this one has frequently been considered by critics in terms of cultural hybridity, or mongrelization to use Rushdie’s terminology, and clearly this is a critical aspect of it. Another crucial element though, as revealed in the final question, is the crisis of belonging. As

a result of immigration, place becomes complicated by multiplicity, experienced contrapuntally. New relationships are forged with people, cultures, and ideas. The link between material place and abstract place then becomes strained, and one is prompted to reconsider the nature of being and belonging in the world. Movement and belonging are twin phenomena. Because of this, while Rushdie is here specifically addressing the concerns of Indian immigrants (Indians “outside India”), one could imagine his question as one implicitly asked by Okri and García as well, as translocation is their lived experience, too. In addition to being reflected in the authors’ own lives, “how are we to live in the world” signifies a tension that propels what I am arguing is a central aspect of each of the novels examined here and thus serves as a significant conceptual axis for this study. It calls into its proximity issues related to self-amidst-world, including belonging, place, identity, and loyalties (how they are forged, structured, conflicted), matters which are also being addressed by contemporary cosmopolitan theorists.

With the term *belonging*, then, I am also invoking a cosmopolitan topos. Gavin Kendall, Ian Woodward, and Zlatko Skrbis suggest: “The question of belonging underpins the notion of cosmopolitanism both historically and philosophically. Diogenes of Sinope’s lapidary claim that he is ‘a citizen of the world’ (*kosmopolitês*) is a profound statement about a sense of belonging and location” (33). As the mention of Diogenes calls to mind, cosmopolitanism refers to a wide field of thought dating back at least to the classical philosophers, the Greek Stoics. While cosmopolitanism has been used pejoratively, from the wandering Jew to the irresponsible intellectual (both criticized for rootlessness), since the 1990s there has been a resurgence of interest in cosmopolitanism and its viability as a banner under which people might consider how human beings are interconnected with one another in our complex world. One reason for this, Amanda Anderson suggests, deals with the global shifts just described: “[Cosmopolitanism] is

[...] commonly articulated in relation to new geopolitical configurations and within the context of destabilizing experiences of intercultural contact and exchange” (“Cosmopolitanism” 268). In addition to Anderson, contemporary theorizations of cosmopolitanism can be also found in the scholarship of Martha Nussbaum, Craig Calhoun, David Hollinger, Pheng Cheah, Bruce Robbins, Richard Rorty, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Paul Rabinow, and James Clifford, to name but a few examples.

Cosmopolitan discussions on human interaction alternate between prescriptive (ethical and idealistic) and descriptive (normative) tones. Some critics use cosmopolitanism to implore people to interact more peaceably and tolerantly, while others use it to describe the complex, even conflicting interconnectedness that is a part of life today in our globalized world.⁴⁵ Common to both the prescriptive and descriptive strains is a concern with questions of belonging and its conceptual relatives—loyalty, solidarity, affiliations, place, identity—questions that overlap with any one or combination of personal, societal, political, and ethical strata. As I hope will be clear by now, Okri, García, and Rushdie’s personal experiences and concerns with these issues recommend the valuable role they play in this unfolding cosmopolitan conversation.⁴⁶ Their explorations of them in *Famished* (1991), *Dreaming* (1992), and *Enchantress* (2008) suggest the way their novels correspond in the arts to the critical work of Martha Nussbaum’s “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” (1994), Timothy Brennan’s *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997), which postdates his popular theorizations on the “Third-World Cosmopolitans” in *Salman Rushdie and the Third World* (1989), Cheah and Robbins’ *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (1998), Appiah’s *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), and Craig Calhoun’s *Cosmopolitanism and Belonging: From European Integration to Global Hopes* (2010). Moreover, Okri, Rushdie, and García’s

narrative representations of cosmopolitan concerns such as belonging offer the benefit of fleshing out in their characters, and thus imaginatively testing, the concepts of theoretical cosmopolitans.

By isolating cosmopolitanism as a theoretical locus amidst a constellation including translocation and belonging, I mean to bring into focus several key issues which float throughout the subsequent chapters and the novels they take as their focus. At the personal level, I explore belonging as it relates to identity and one's sense of place. Each of these narratives dramatizes how characters intuit senses of self-amidst-world. *Dreaming* and *Famished* emphasize the role of small-level attachments, those of family, friends, lovers, and community, in the development of one's sense of selfhood, while in *Enchantress* characters' separation from communities of descent is a necessary condition for identity formation. Movement is also a key factor in the personal-psychological experience of belonging, and it is a key factor at play in each of these novels: Dad and the abiku Azaro's movement between the spirit and human worlds; Pilar's immigration to the US; and Qara Köz's movement between East and West. All foreground the topic of being-in-the-world and the difficulty one encounters when navigating through it.

Because belonging is not restricted to individual experience though, I also interrogate how these novels depict group belonging, or social solidarity. How do the narratives imagine the world to be organized? How do they recommend who belongs with whom? As with the cosmopolitan theorists mentioned, in these novels this type of imagining acquires, at various moments, both descriptive and prescriptive contours. I have therefore tried to keep in view the ways these narratives outline beneficial and harmful models of belonging.

To strategize belonging, as these novels use magical realism to do, is to participate in a kind of cosmopolitan mapping. The cosmopolitan concern with human attachments among

individuals and groups lends itself to visualization and a cartographic lexicon, and, indeed, cosmopolitans tend to discuss their concepts geometrically. In what is perhaps the most famous example of this, Nussbaum revives from Hierocles the Greek term *kosmou politês*, or world citizens, the image of concentric circles, a useful visual aid for thinking about how loyalty between self and others is organized (7). According to Nussbaum, this is an image in which one imagines

the first [ring] encircles the self, the next takes in the immediate family, then follows the extended family, then, in order, neighbors or local groups, fellow city-dwellers, and fellow countrymen—and we can easily add to this list groupings based on ethnic, linguistic, historical, professional, gender, or sexual identities. Outside all these circles is the largest one, humanity as a whole. (9)

In another example, Robbins insists the world is composed of divergent cosmopolitanisms drawn “on a series of scales [...] both within and beyond the nation,” though they might include the nation, too (“Introduction” 12). Rorty evokes the image of “expanding and contracting loyalties” (45). Domna C. Stanton, in exhorting the need for one to identify with one’s others, the “I-in-you,” praises the “cosmopolitan, centrifugal impulse” (629). Concentric circles, series of scales, overlapping, clashing, attachments, the cosmos, and local versus global: these are the kinds of spatially evocative terms one inevitably encounters in the cosmopolitan vernacular.

Contemporary maps are often printed and viewed in their political variant, a near-magical material manifestation of Benedict Anderson’s imagined communities. These maps depict the international globe as a rainbow composed of differently colored nation-states. If the world has ever been imagined similarly, as composed of groups bounded by communities of descent such as the national model suggests, that map is now not only being called into question, but discarded for alternative and plural versions. In contrast to these political maps, cosmopolitan maps tend to be far less ostensibly fixed and come in an infinite number of shapes and sizes.

Robbins intimates this wide array of possibilities and the way cosmopolitanism multiplies the kind of cartography Anderson invokes when he writes: “Difficult as it may be to make a plural for ‘cosmos,’ it is now assumed more and more that worlds, like nations, come in different sizes and styles. Like nations, worlds too are ‘imagined’” (“Introduction” 2). People imagine being- and belonging-in-the-world differently and thus generate different cosmopolitan maps. Human beings’ attachments complicate—exceeding and preceding—the boundaries of traditional or existing group belonging, be that nation, ethnos, or religion. This alone begins to convey why the six to seven billion human beings who share residence on earth compile nearly infinite versions of cosmopolitan maps.

To confuse matters even further, theorists invoke cosmopolitanism in different senses, and thus concern themselves with distinctive theoretical territories similar to the way traditional cartographers can create maps of the same geographical space, but one depicts elevation, one human population, and another political boundaries. As Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen note in reference to the six different invocations of cosmopolitanism they document, some theorists use the term to refer to “a vision of global democracy and world citizenship” (1). Kant advocated this form of “cosmo-political system” in his “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay” (1798). He contends that global “perpetual peace” is possible for humankind to achieve if sovereign nations would, while retaining their autonomy, willfully enter into “*a free Federation of the States* [sic],” limiting their liberties particularly in the case of entering into war (99-100). Nussbaum also advocates a type of world citizenship, if not in a directly political sense but a theoretical and ethical one, referring to “the worldwide community of human beings” (4). However, Nussbaum’s form of universalist cosmopolitan mapping recasts the national, rainbow-colored map into a single, and to some, disconcertingly monochromatic tone.

In contrast to both Kant's and Nussbaum's usages, Robbins insists on the concept's (now) amoral nature, and his view, in turn, is descriptive, not prescriptive. He recommends cosmopolitanism as "a reality of (re)attachment, multiple attachment, and attachment at a distance" ("Introduction" 3). One might then envision Robbins' socially concentrated cosmopolitan map as palimpsestically laid atop the current, nationally-subdivided global map, depicting a dizzying and disordered array of countless lines, both long and short, crossing and recrossing the globe.

As mentioned, this study is concerned with cosmopolitan maps of human belonging. Because of the complexity inherent in cosmopolitan mapping, I have benefited from relying upon several tools, borrowed from the cosmopolitan conversation, through which to analyze and sketch the various representations generated by the novels analyzed in this study. Individuals derive significant senses of meaning, including belonging, place, and identity, through their attachments to other individuals, groups, loci, and ideas. As Kendall, Woodward, and Skrbis explain:

One's sense of where and with whom one belongs can be connected at a variety of scales, some of which reflect core sociological concerns with class and status groups, and others of which may connect to more nebulous senses of shared identity. Thus a list of sites of belonging might include: profession, sense of class position, ethnicity, nationality and religion; but it would also include such connections as social clubs, friendship circles, support for a sports team, or adoption of certain fashions. (38)

Because of the relationship between attachments and belonging, an analysis of characters' attachments and/or lack thereof yields valuable insight into a novel's strategy of belonging. One can trace the way a character is surrounded within a web of diverse, even competing attachments, or "conflicting loyalties" as Rorty describes (45).

Dreaming's cosmopolitan map of belonging includes geographical, political, and relational attachments. The del Pino family is spread across both sides of the Florida Straits, so this narrative's cosmopolitan map includes in its frame a differentiated, if limited, geo-political

terrain, that of Cuba and the US. Celia's *fidelismo* and Lourdes' American patriotism are (competing) nationalist attachments. Through belonging to these wider groups and their ideals, these women derive crucial senses of purpose, identity, and place. Over and above these attachments, though, it is familial attachments to which *Dreaming* defers as its primary source for belonging (or cause of alienation). This point is foundational for understanding the novel's strategy of belonging. The family nexus forges inescapable bonds which define the del Pino family members' lives. Hence, *Dreaming*'s cosmopolitan map traces the relational webs among three generations of del Pinos, which in turn expand outward to include other family nexuses. If one were to extend *Dreaming*'s strategy into a model for understanding human belonging on a global level, one might begin to envision a very complex geometry in which families are the organizing framework interconnecting people among a vast number of geo-political spaces.

The image of concentric circles has been another profitable instrument for analyzing the novels' strategies of belonging. One can use it to locate a narrative's attitude to insiders and outsiders, as Sissela Bok explains:

The metaphor from Hierocles that Nussbaum discusses [in her "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism"]—of concentric circles of human concern and allegiance—speaks to the necessary tensions between what we owe to insiders and outsiders of the many interlocking groups in which we find ourselves. It is a metaphor long used to urge us to stretch our concern outward from the narrowest personal confines toward the needs of outsiders, strangers, all of humanity [...]. But more often it has been invoked to convey a contrasting view: that of "my station and its duties," according to which our allegiances depend on our situation and role in life and cannot be overridden by obligations to humanity at large. (39)

With this description, Bok intimates considering the concentric circles image in terms of directionality, or in which direction one should/does move on this image, inwards or outwards. One's orientation to these rings suggests how one organizes these, at times, conflicting and, frequently, complex obligations. Should one, beginning from the center wherein the individual is

located, reach over the inner circles towards the widest ring of humanity, as Nussbaum argues? According to her, the only correct ethical posture is centrifugal: “It is this community [of human beings] that is, fundamentally, the source of our moral obligations” (7). Or, as Appiah argues, are human beings appropriately centripetal, or drawn towards the smaller rings, which is why he advocates a “rooted cosmopolitanism” (“Cosmopolitan Patriots” 22). As this debate shows, considering the concentric circles in terms of directionality can be used to identify where a particular cosmopolitan voice is positioned among the spectrum of the discussion: Nussbaum’s reach towards universal humanity forming one point and Appiah’s situated cosmopolitanism another. Likewise, it follows that this tool is useful for identifying where a particular narrative’s strategy fits among the differing positions.

As will be recalled, the core of the concentric circles represents those groups into which a person is born: family, neighborhood, city, and then country. Urging people to not show preference to those in one’s inner circles, Nussbaum states emphatically: “The accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any nation” (“Patriotism” 7). Extracting and adapting the phrase accidents of birth from the pejorative tone with which Nussbaum imbued it, I have applied it as another method through which to analyze each novel’s strategy of belonging. A narrative’s attitude towards inherited attachments, including the responsibility one has towards them, illuminates its view of belonging.

In *Famished* the accidents of birth, both familial and national, are not accidents at all, but destiny, a characterization which elevates these ties. While *Dreaming* does not depict this fatalistic stance, it shares with Okri’s novel the attitude that familial attachments are crucial to characters’ development and well-being. In *Enchantress*, on the other hand, characters demonstrate that this kind of particularism generates closed-mindedness and an unethical

favoring of “my kin” over fellow human. Rushdie’s novel, then, can be situated on the side of the cosmopolitan spectrum that is also inhabited by Nussbaum’s universalist-inflected cosmopolitanism. These narratives encompass divergent perspectives not only concerning the “accidents of birth,” but also attachments and directionality on the concentric circles, which makes apparent why and how the cosmopolitan maps forged by each differ.

Controversy?

The hermeneutical approach developed in this study identifies the crucial significance strategies of belonging play in each of these novels. However, without a sufficient understanding of the potentially wide ambit of the mode’s aesthetics, something I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, this key aspect would likely go undetected, lying as it does outside of the bounds of the deconstructive magical realist critical paradigm. To be more precise, the construction of various cartographies of world-belonging would be obscured by a restricted hermeneutic that sees narrative magic as necessarily tied to particular political or aesthetic agendas.

This study’s framework challenges prevalent understandings of the mode, arguing for the distinction between magical realism’s minimal aesthetic requirements and the thematics and/or extratextual usages deployed by a single novel or stage in the mode’s history. This stance raises several questions. Does it detract from magical realism’s historically postcolonial usages to argue, as this study does, that the mode is aesthetically capable of exceeding this prescriptive type of interpretation? What do critics forfeit by making this concession? What do we forfeit by not making it?

With this allowance, one risks “controversy,” as Hegerfeldt has recognized. The intimation that magical realism might be employed for reasons additional to postcolonial strategies of resistance and self-definition seems to threaten to detract from this very important phase in the

mode's historical development. This need not be the case, though. Critics can keep in view both this specific moment and the general aesthetic parameters. Furthermore, maintaining the postcolonial usage holds its own risks, when magical realism degenerates into a mere kitschy formula used to sell novels wherein indigenous populations are romanticized within a real world setting such as seen in the novel and film adaptation of Joanne Harris's *Chocolat*. In these instances, magical realism is too watered down to affect any semblance of resistance. Not making this concession, then, carries its own consequences. If the deconstructive paradigm is the only one critics and writers employ, the mode becomes an all too expected formula, not only fatigued but also dated, as both authors and circumstances (postcolonial and otherwise) change. Besides, magical realism is not inherently destabilizing and defiant. This expects far too much of a text or narrative mode. Like any work from any aesthetic domain, composition matters, the way (and quality) in which language is used.

Chapter Two

Vernacular Humanism in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*

Believe me, to be born, to stay alive, and to turn into a destiny is a long and great struggle.
– Ben Okri

The nation, even as the individual, is the end product of a long period of work, sacrifice and devotion. – Ernest Renan¹

Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) enacts an imagined return to origins for Okri, what his character Azaro would refer to as a "homecoming" (28). Rooted in the nation of Okri's birth, Nigeria, Pietro Deandrea even suggests that the "Nigerian urban ghetto" in which *Famished Road* is set is based on the city where Okri spent his youth, Lagos (48). The narrative tunnels backwards in time not only towards Okri's own beginnings, though, but also that of Nigeria's. Situated in a moment preceding the corruption within the nation's internal leadership, its civil war (the Biafran War of 1967-70), and border disputes, the narrative unfolds at the dawning of the nation's independence. In this aspect of his novel, Okri is representative of the West Africans Stephanie Newell describes who, in the open spaces left by colonial rule, "through creative writing, newspapers, sport, politics, and popular culture, as well as through cross-border military cooperation [...] worked hard in the decades since the 1960s to fill out their boundaries and imagine new national communities for themselves" (21).

If the nation is one prominent issue within *Famished Road*, however, it is one which must be viewed alongside the corresponding salience of human being. Okri suggests the novel's encompassing of these two extremes when he asserts in an interview: "[...] one may be writing about Nigeria, but that terrain may be the place in which one can best see very strong universal concerns" ("Ben" 337). This chapter will explore the way that *Famished Road*'s narrative ambit

includes local attachments as well as the fraternity of humanity, two very earthly matters in a metaphysically complex narrative which are extended through magical realist aesthetics.²

In the previous chapter, I suggested that magical realism's two codes of magic, or the supernatural, and realism could be interwoven in different ways, affecting various narratological outcomes. I then outlined three *modus operandi* organizing the way critics tend to discuss these various functionalities: magic can subvert the code of realism and the Western values realism represents; magic and realism might be locked in suspension with one another, rendering textual voids; and/or magic and realism correspond in a summational way, adding to or building upon each other. Each of the three novels undertaken in this study is read through the lens of the latter, while noting moments when the other *modus operandi* are at play, as I explore how Okri, Cristina García, and Salman Rushdie utilize magical realism's aesthetic properties to construct, or (make) present, strategies of belonging, the means through which characters derive individual senses of identity, place, and meaning, and, by extension, imaginary maps of the world's social solidarities.

As will be seen in the subsequent chapters, in García's *Dreaming in Cuban* narrative magic frequently illustrates that intimate, individual relationships, the most prominent being those among its del Pino family, are the primary influence on characters' senses of being and belonging in the world. In *The Enchantress of Florence*, Rushdie embodies contrasting representations of belonging, as is seen in his two magical female protagonists, Jodhabai and Qara Köz, the former illustrating a restrictive and xenophobic way of inhabiting the world and the latter dramatizing an idealized means of belonging through exile. Okri's *Famished Road* proves unique from both of these novels in that while in *Dreaming* narrative magic works in partnership with the narrative's strategy of belonging and in *Enchantress* narrative magic

illustrates both how to and not to belong, *Famished Road*'s strategy of belonging is most closely affiliated with the code of realism, specifically with the domain of human being, natal attachments, and the true nation. This strategy will later be referred to as vernacular humanism, a nomenclature which pulls together with the humanist half of the term an elevated status of human being, and, with the vernacular half, the particular attachments into which one is born: first human life itself, then family, community, and nation.

Crucially, *Famished Road*'s handling of realism must be distinguished from what Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris refer to as "the mimetic constraints of nineteenth- and twentieth-century realism" insofar as that mode's representation of the world, through a naturalist worldview, is understood as sufficiently reflecting it ("Introduction" 2). Remembering that in the summational *modus operandi*, magic and reality are compatible with one another, the real in this narrative is suffused with the supernatural. In what might otherwise seem paradoxical, then, *Famished Road* employs the supernatural to ennoble the natural domain, or, to use the language of magical realist aesthetics, the code of magic elevates the code of realism.

The notion that a magical realist text would employ its aesthetic tools in this way goes against the grain of a critically pervasive view of magical realism as functioning exclusively within the subversive *modus operandi*. In this paradigm, magical realist texts are interpreted as necessarily coterminous with a postcolonial and/or postmodern politic of resistance towards realism and the Western frameworks realism implies: naturalism, rationalism, colonization, and patriarchy. Consequently, narrative magic is often interpreted as functioning to undermine the code of realism, a symbolic enactment of this resistance politics. While subversion has been a historically and aesthetically crucial deployment of the mode, magical realist texts cannot be restricted to this single *modus operandi*. *Famished Road* offers a case in point, for this

particularist hermeneutic, its restriction of the mode to particular aesthetic enactments of socio-political issues, would not be able to make sense of, first, this narrative's crucial affiliation of its protagonists with the domain of human being and reality, and thus the code of realism, and, second, its employing realism to endorse (a form of) humanism, a framework closely affiliated with the West and colonization.

This particularist view of magical realism, when applied unilaterally, suggests an aesthetic structuring of a reductive binary comprised of the Rest versus the West. *Famished Road*, however, overwhelms that polarity, complicating any such either/or politico-aesthetic dichotomy. While the narrative's strategy of belonging draws from Western frameworks in its reliance upon the code of realism to recommend a form of humanism, *Famished Road*'s humanist strategy of belonging counters colonial humanism, while directing its most pointed criticism specifically at the narrative's neocolonial political regimes. It is aligned with postcolonial humanism, specifically a distinct West African form. Finally, and key for this study, its use of magical and realist codes to construct a humanist model of being and belonging in the world affiliates Okri's novel with a prior and formative variant of the mode. The writing of Cuban Alejo Carpentier and Haitian Jacques Stephen Alexis commonly affirm what Carpentier termed *lo real maravilloso*, or the marvels within reality, and so along with Okri can be seen as comprising a transatlantic West African-Caribbean strain of magical realism.

To Become a Man

Famished Road depicts a copious number of protagonists undergoing decisive processes of development, both psychic and physical, what the narrative refers to at one point in the infinitive phrase to become a man. This feature suggests the way Okri's novel might be read as a postcolonial uber-*Bildungsroman*.³ It encompasses not one, but five *bildungshelds*, if a quite

eccentric group of them, as three of these figures, Azaro, the King of the Unborn, and the abiku nation of Nigeria, alternately dwell on earth and in the spirit world, while Dad and the Photographer are already the age and physical stature of men. This is not a traditional coming of age narrative, one must remember, but a magical realist variant. While each of these figures emphasizes distinctive aspects of maturation, the narrative's associating all of them with this process suggests they might be beneficially viewed together. The unifying thread that runs through these figures, the focus of this chapter, is their development into a common means of being and belonging in the world, so that *Famished Road*'s maturation motif encodes its strategy of belonging.

Before performing close readings exploring what each character uniquely contributes to this composite motif, an analysis of the linguistic components of the phrase to become a man organizes what it is their shared strategy will be seen to entail. The words *to become* signal the common process through which these figures develop, their coming to act in solidarity with their natal attachments—whether that be a character's own human life, his family, community, and/or nation—and this in active and self-sacrificing opposition to any figures, supernatural or otherwise, who would obstruct this solidarity. The term *manhood*, on the other hand, a term which somewhat reluctantly is expanded to include womanhood, as will be seen, identifies the object of becoming, a goal which situates the ideal locus of belonging, identity, and meaning among humanity. These protagonists' development thus maps a pattern of belonging in which the universal human fraternity (*manhood*) is achieved through care for local, natal attachments (*to become*).

Also important to note, both the means and the end of maturation ennoble the domain of human being (among other domains). What makes this humanist feature especially intriguing,

and distinctly literary, is the way Okri employs narrative magic to achieve it. There are four various, through interrelated ways this transpires which will be traced throughout the protagonists' maturation: inversion, enfoldment, advocacy, and opposition. First, narrative magic and realism effect an inversion of the values hierarchy wherein the supernatural presides over the natural realm, rendering the human domain as the locus of supreme value. This will be seen later in the reversal of the Heaven/earth binary. Second, and corresponding with the last, transcendent value, such as destiny, is enfolded within the mortal plane. Third, narrative magic acts in advocacy of human beings and their attachments. This is exemplified in the way the maturation of Dad's character (remember, Dad is already physically a man) involves supernatural growth. In contrast to the last, in the fourth type narrative magic functions in opposition to realism. The protagonists must repudiate malignant supernatural entities who are antithetical to their natal attachments, and thus their maturation.

Famished Road opens by alerting the reader to its central theme of maturation. In a spirit world referred to as "the land of origins" where unborn and abiku spirits, or spirit-children, are presided over by the King of the Unborn, Azaro, still a spirit at this point, explains that their king has become a man and woman many times.⁴ While Azaro and the other abikus are making oaths with each other to return from life at their first opportunity, and thus never become men, the reader is presented with the opposing example of their king:

He had been born uncountable times and was a legend in all worlds [...]. It never mattered into what circumstances he was born. He always lived the most extraordinary of lives. [...] Sometimes a man, sometimes a woman, he wrought incomparable achievements from every life. If there is anything common to all of his lives, the essence of his genius, it might well be the love of transformation, and the transformation of love into higher realities. (3)

Azaro does not specify what these "transformations" are, but leaves them in general terms. This is important for the way that it sets up the King as an initial rubric through which subsequent

figures can be interpreted. His character establishes, broadly, that maturation entails the engendering of positive change within one's human life, whatever the specific details of that life might happen to be.

The King's character contributes several other significant aspects to *Famished Road's* maturation motif. He reflects the employment of narrative magic as enfoldment. The King is a powerful spirit being, the ruler of the Unborn, yet "the essence of his genius" lies in his bringing transformation to his mortal lives. Thus, his authoritative character models that supreme value is embedded within the human domain.

This values hierarchy begins to suggest how *Famished Road* inflects the notion of the accidents of birth, that cosmopolitan tool discussed in chapter one. This study has borrowed and transmuted a similar phrase from cosmopolitan theorist Martha Nussbaum in order to assess each of these narratives' attitudes towards inherited affiliations, such as family and nation. Nussbaum employs the word *accidents* to underscore the arbitrariness of natal ties and thus to denigrate the status people tend to attribute to them. In *Famished Road*, the attachments into which the King is born are arbitrary ("it never mattered into what circumstances he was born"), but in significantly different senses than is connoted by Nussbaum's usage of the term.

First, natal attachments are arbitrary in that none are able to prevent the King from transforming them into "higher realities." In this the narrative stresses not the particularities of ties, but one's handling of them. It is this aspect of the King's human lives that is most laudable, according to Azaro. Second, natal attachments are arbitrary in the sense that they are unchosen, but not, as Nussbaum further suggests, in terms of their value. On the contrary, natal ties in *Famished Road* are an integral part of a person's destiny, a point which again enacts enfoldment, as transcendent and supernaturally predestined purpose is located within the human plane. Okri

illustrates this again with Azaro, for when it is time for Azaro's ceremony of birth in the spirit realm, the King prophesies to him: "You will have to travel many roads before you find the river of your destiny" (5-6). Ato Quayson points to this aspect of destiny, or predestination, as one of the significant components that the abiku mythology encompasses within the West African worldview: "The concept of the *abiku* is what may be described as a 'constellar concept' because it embraces various beliefs about predestination, reincarnation and the relationship between the real world and that of spirits" (*Strategic* 123). However, not only traditional abiku figures are given a destiny in *Famished Road*, but Okri extends the abiku "condition" beyond the realm of West Africa to a common, global condition which includes diverse people, events, and places, and by so doing suggests destiny itself is a common condition of human life. Many things "are of [the abiku] condition," Azaro explains,

nations, civilizations, ideas, half-discoveries, [...] historical events. [...] They all yearn to make of themselves a beautiful sacrifice, a difficult sacrifice, to bring transformation, and to die shedding light within this life [...] scorched by the strange ecstasy of the will ascending to say yes to destiny and illumination. (487)

In distinction from Nussbaum, *Famished Road* suffuses the notion of accidents of birth with, on the one hand, responsibility and subjectivity and, on the other, with possibility and profound meaning.

For all of his remarkable characteristics, insofar as the King models what maturation ideally involves, his character contains a problematic suggestion. While he was able to generate "incomparable achievements" from every life no matter the circumstances, surely some situations rob people of the choices and abilities to do the same?⁵ At least, transformation might be possible only in varying degrees. The *Famished Road* trilogy firmly stands against any suggestion of victimhood, though, as seen in its placing absolute responsibility for change on the shoulders of the people. "Every domination is an illusion which we accept," Azaro proclaims in

the sequel to *Famished Road*, *Songs of Enchantment* (137). In the tension between empowerment and victimization which Okri seeks to address, this aspect of it seems to lack the “love,” or at least compassion, the King’s example works to engender.

For Azaro, becoming a man is a struggle enacted at a literal level, a question of whether or not he will physically become a man. While this question might be seen as reflecting the plight of any child in a deeply impoverished community, for Azaro manhood is an issue brought into a special tension because he is an abiku. Azaro explains that “those who broke their pacts” to return to the spirit world “were assailed by hallucinations and haunted by their companions. They would only find consolation when they returned to the world of the Unborn [...] where their loved ones would be waiting for them silently” (4). This harassment ensures that most abikus will never become men. In order to mature, an abiku would have to violate his oath, thereby signaling a determined choice to sustain loyalty to his natal ties above that to his spirit companions, which is precisely what Azaro does.

The most basic natal attachment Azaro must learn to esteem in order to become a man is his human life itself. The narrative flags Azaro’s development in this area after one (of many) near-death experiences. In this particular moment, Azaro has followed a three-headed spirit into the world beyond with the intention of relinquishing his mortality, one of the powers with which the abiku is endowed, out of vengeance on Dad who has unfairly punished him. However, while traveling for days to the land of the spirits, a destination at which he will finally die, Azaro makes a crucial discovery which results in his deciding not to follow through with this journey, the incomparable value of earth and human being which the narrative extends through an inversion of the Heaven/earth binary.

Azaro is perplexed by a group of beings building a road, so the spirit explains that these are dead people who “got tired of eternity. [...] One day their prophet told them [...] of a particular people. A great people who did not know their own greatness. The prophet called that world Heaven and said they should build a great road so that they could visit those people.” These figures are both dead and in eternity, yet the narrative identifies this place as imperfect and tiresome. Where then is Heaven? When Azaro inquires why the other world was referred to as Heaven, the spirit responds:

Heaven means different things to different people. [The dead] wanted to live, to be more alive. They wanted to know the essence of pain, they wanted to suffer, to feel, to love, to hate, to be greater than hate, and to be imperfect in order to always have something to strive towards, which is beauty. They wanted also to know wonder and to live miracles. Death is too perfect. (329)

The reversal is all but spelled out now, for the Heaven towards which the dead are striving contains the elements of mortality: pain, suffering, feeling, love, hate, striving. Heaven is earth. This inversion recurs in another scene, though transposed, when Azaro relates that spirits “get tired of being just spirits. They want to taste of human things, pain, drunkenness, laughter, and sex” (136). While it is unclear from what specific resource or aggregate configuration of Heaven Okri is drawing (West African, Western-Christian), what is clear is that with this reversal of a Heaven/earth and spirit/human binary the narrative is relying upon a conception of Heaven and the beyond as a desirable location, especially in contrast to earth.⁶ These two inversion scenarios, both of which involve Azaro’s realizing that spirits covet human experience, bring into focus what it is that this specific employment of narrative magic gives to the narrative. It elevates humanity and the domain of human being above the supernatural. “Wonder” and “miracles” are found exclusively in human life. Even suffering is redeemed, sought after by spirits, because it offers the unique human possibility of striving after beauty.

Azaro has apparently imbibed this lesson, for at the last moment, when he has almost traveled too far to return home, he decides to terminate his journey. He wants to live. When Azaro awakens, he exhibits a newfound awe of mortality:

The world was new to me, everything was fresh. It was the earliest days of creation. I marveled at cobwebs and cockroaches. I couldn't stop staring at people's faces and their eyes. The fact that human beings talked, laughed, wept, sweated, sang, without some visible thing which made all the animation possible, the fact that they were alive in their bodies, contained this thing called life in their flesh, seemed incredible to me. [...] With eyes wide open from a new fear of sleep, I looked at the world, I tried to see all that was in it, I embraced all things into my life. I hugged the alarming mystery of reality, and grew stronger. (342)

The vocabulary utilized in this scene is a precursor to Dad's shouting "EVERYTHING IS HOLY!" after he has literally and metaphorically learned to see in *Songs of Enchantment* (283). Furthermore, both instances suggest a meaning that cannot be limited to an animist manifesto.⁷ Rather, these instances must additionally be considered in light of the narrative's reversal of the Heaven/earth binary, one of several mechanisms through which it is structuring its values hierarchy. This scene with Azaro ennobles the mundane within human life—the "cobwebs and cockroaches," "people's faces and their eyes," laughing, weeping, sweating, singing, "bodies," "this thing called life in their flesh." It is these aspects which are "incredible," in juxtaposition to the spirit domain to which Azaro almost relinquished his mortality.

Azaro's realization of "the alarming mystery of reality" proves a crucial step in the process of his maturation, for by it, the narrative notes, he "grew stronger." This moment signals Azaro's association with becoming a man. More than that, it illustrates that maturation is a dually physical and internal process. Azaro's growth refers simultaneously to physical strength, he grew stronger after not having eaten for two weeks, and psychic maturation, he learns to appreciate life's wonders. Because of Azaro's ontology, his being an abiku, he must develop in both areas to become a man, unlike Dad and the Photographer who already inhabit mature bodies. Azaro

will only undergo the torment incurred by breaking his pact and the suffering of his impoverished mortal life after he psychically matures, coming to view the human plane as the actual, and greatly coveted, Heaven.

Besides learning the immense value of his human life, Azaro's becoming a man requires that he come to place his first loyalty with his family instead of with his spirit companions. Azaro's ontologically hyphenated identity—he is a spirit-human child— means that belonging is fought out in his complex physicality: he is caught between conflicting loyalties, to use Richard Rorty's term, between his spirit and human attachments, and this conflict is for him a life-or-death issue (45). The abiku mythopoeia does not allow him to neatly synthesize the two attachments; he is forced to choose between them. Azaro must reside either in his human life or in the world of spirits, to which he can return if he gives up his human life.

Traditional abiku figures, when faced with conflicting loyalties, privilege their spirit ties, and as a result bring much grief to their human families. This figuration is represented in Azaro's closest friend, Ade, with whom Azaro is juxtaposed. In the long West African tradition of the abiku there are variations of this concept. Ade dramatizes the Igbo word for abiku, *ogbanje*, “which holds the implications of a weird, capricious, callous, and sadistic kind of behavior—which is how the abikus are perceived due to the suffering they cause to their parents and community” (Soliman 152). Ade, who wants to return to his spirit companions, is characterized by his cold indifference towards his parents, Azaro describes:

I never knew how different we both were till that morning when his father began his long tirade, his complaints, all designed to make his son feel guilty. Ade, his head held lightly, with his eyes fixed on ghosts, simply left the window and went out of the room as if he were sleepwalking. His father followed him, caught between anger and despair. (486)

In contrast, one reason Azaro decides to break his oath with his spirit companions and remain alive is because of his mum: “I wanted to make happy the bruised face of the woman who would become my mother” (5).

In addition to diverging from abiku figurations within the text, Azaro is also differentiated from abikus in West African oral and written narratives and poetry, Mounira Soliman contends. Soliman points to the popularity of the abiku phenomenon both in West African culture and its literature: “Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Goke Ajiboye, and more recently Syl Cheney-Coker, Debo Kotun; and, in francophone language, Olympe Bhejy-Quenum are but a few of the writers who have handled the abiku notion in their writings” (150).⁸ Amidst this expansive body of literature, Soliman explains that there are two traditional treatments of the abiku phenomenon. The first deals with the spirit-child as unwilling to stay and grieving his mother, as Ade represents. In the Yoruba language, the word *abiku* is translated “one who is born to die” (151). A second variation of the abiku, also derived from Yoruba society but dating from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, depicts the conflict between traditional and modern ways of life. The metaphoric richness of the abiku—which includes predestination, reincarnation, the spirit/human interconnection, and the mother/child relationship—“have made it possible for these writers to adapt it so as to project different socio-political agendas at different times in the history of their countries” (151).

Performing a comparative analysis of Okri’s treatment of the abiku in *Famished Road* against J. P. Clark-Bekederemo and Wole Soyinka’s poems, Soliman points out that Okri “tackles the same historical period covered by Clark-Bekederemo and Soyinka, Nigeria on the verge of independence facing social and political turmoil” (164). Yet, compared to the other two writers, Soliman concludes:

Clearly Okri offers a different interpretation from both Clark-Bekederemo and Soyinka. They all start from the same historical standpoint which is the African oral tradition but whereas Clark-Bekederemo sticks to that position, and Soyinka projects an oppositional relationship between history and modernity, Okri deconstructs history and offers instead a progressive reading of the future that does not exclude the past but moves beyond it. In other words, Okri advocates history as a natural step toward a present and more importantly toward a future [...].⁹

Okri achieves this through the way he “deconstructs [the] traditional image [of the abiku] by allowing Azaro to choose life over death. In doing so, Azaro breaks the vicious cycle of birth and rebirth, which has caused much suffering for his family, and instead attempts to fulfill a social obligation toward his community” (165-66). In contrast to Soliman, Deandrea suggests that the breaking of the abiku pact is not unique. Drawing from Bolaji Idowu, he refers to the way the abiku can be prohibited from returning to the spirit world: “Sometimes, the spirit may be made to ‘decide’ to break the pact with its spirit-companions and remain a human being on earth” (49). However, while in *Famished Road* Azaro’s parents are advised to perform the ritual which would enforce this, they never do, a point of significance which Soliman addresses: “It is important to note that Azaro willfully chooses life over death and is not forced to remain alive through the rituals which his parents undertake to sever his relationship with his spirit companions” (166).

With his reinterpretation of the abiku, Okri forges a revised abiku ethic, one in which natal attachments take precedence over spirit attachments, a theme which reverberates throughout the narrative’s other *bildungshelds*, abiku or otherwise. Azaro does not denounce the spirit realm altogether, but opposes those beings who would force him to relinquish his human life and familial ties. He continues to rely upon and benefit from the help of the King of the Unborn, whose supernatural advocacy on Azaro’s behalf helps him remain alive, a fact which demonstrates the way the King himself upholds this ethic.

The Photographer Jeremiah is the character who gives to the narrative the phrase to become a man, as Azaro relates: “On [Jeremiah’s] photographic encasement was written the legend, white against black leather: TO BECOME A MAN.” This inscription is unexplained here, leading Azaro to ponder it, and thus drawing attention to it: “Was it a question unasked, a riddle unstated, or a declaration unfinished? I had no idea. I stared at the words mesmerized” (230). While Azaro is implicated in this moment, this scene primarily attributes maturation to the Photographer (these words are inscribed on his belongings), a figure who already is, physically speaking, a man. Okri is clearly after something other than mere physical development in his use of this motif. Indeed, it is through the already physically mature characters, the Photographer and Dad, that the narrative most saliently illustrates that becoming a man involves an internal evolution.

The Photographer is shown to be sorely in need of internal development. Initially, he is dominated by his poverty, which in turn makes him self-focused and mean. The Photographer pesters Azaro: “Worry your father for me. I will give you a shilling if he pays for his pictures.” And bullies him: “He then threatened never to feed me again or speak to me till the pictures had been paid for. [...] His hunger and bitterness made him ugly, and I avoided him for a while.” Then, the Photographer’s poverty and his meanness begin to increase proportionately: “His hunger got worse. [...] In the nights we heard him raving, abusing everyone for not paying up, shouting that it was people like us who drove honest men to crime and corruption” (142-43). The Photographer’s character begins to evolve, however, after his political imprisonment: “Prison seemed to have changed him and he went around with a strange new air of myth about him, as if he had conceived heroic roles for himself during the short time he had been away” (155).

That the Photographer has matured is signaled by the fact that it is after his imprisonment when Azaro sees the writing about becoming a man inscribed on Jeremiah's camera case. The location of the phrase offers a clue to its seemingly enigmatic meaning. While camera equipment is itself inert, Jeremiah uses this equipment to oppose the tyranny of the politicians over his community and nation, signaling the way that resistance and defiance of oppression are themselves tools through which one matures. The Photographer's maturation is also recognizable from his images themselves, as Brenda Cooper points out: "What changes is that the photographer begins to capture not just portraits of families and groups, but the political scandals and corruptions of the new Nigeria about to emerge" (107). Thus, the change in the images reflects a change in the Photographer's social role. While the Photographer's family portraits did enact a social function, such as when he provides his services to document significant moments in the community like the party thrown by Mum and Dad when Azaro regains his health, Jeremiah's crucial development occurs when he begins to globally publicize his images of the community's oppression by the political Parties of the Rich and Poor, a point which illustrates that (internal) maturation manifests in socio-political action on behalf of one's natal community.

Because of his activism, Jeremiah becomes hunted by political thugs. Azaro dreams that "the thugs jumped on the camera and stamped on it trying to crush and destroy it" (173). He is finally forced to flee and becomes one of the few characters who translocates beyond the borders of the community. Cooper identifies the Photographer as the only truly cosmopolitan figure of the narrative, one who "revels in the experience of traveling the world" instead of falling back on "a reincarnation of the old gods, a re-birth which engages in a quite particular struggle for nationalist consolidation and healing," as she contrastingly reads Dad's character as doing (98).¹⁰ However, cosmopolitanism might be situated in parameters wider than escape from communities

of descent (here, myth/religion and nationhood), contra the universal cosmopolitanism discussed in chapter four. This study associates one's navigating the complex issue of belonging within the world as itself a cosmopolitan issue, and from this perspective all five of these protagonists can be viewed as cosmopolitan figures. Moreover, what the Photographer's cosmopolitanism, particularly his means of belonging, brings to the fore is his glocal positionality, the way his global movement remains locally rooted.¹¹ He stays, throughout the *Famished Road* trilogy, consistently loyal to his natal community, periodically sneaking back at unexpected moments to visit and help Dad, Mum, and Azaro and to take more photographs. If the Photographer is a cosmopolitan, then, he is a "cosmopolitan patriot," to use Kwame Anthony Appiah's terminology ("Cosmopolitan").

Dad's maturation is linked to three significant fights. While informally training as a boxer, Dad, whose fighting name is Black Tyger, is engaged first by Yellow Jaguar, a being Dad realizes afterwards has been deceased for several years. Dad is initially badly beaten by Yellow Jaguar, but when Azaro, the only human witness to the match, yells out, "Black Tyger, USE YOUR POWER!" it triggers something in Dad:

And Dad, dead on cue, utterly surprised the man with the unrestrained and desperate fury of his own counter-attack. Dad rose miraculously in stature. And with all the concentrated rage and insanity of those who have a single moment in which to choose between living and dying, Dad broke the chains of his exhaustion and thundered such blows on the man as would annihilate an entire race of giants. (357)

This fight exemplifies a narrative moment when magic and realism interface in an oppositional way. Yellow Jaguar poses a threat to Dad's life, forcing him to "choose between living and dying," yet Dad's human "POWER" proves superior to that of his spirit opponent, and, Azaro suggests, over even a "race of giants." In this instance, then, the narrative subordinates the supernatural to the latent capacities within humankind.

That Dad's own "choice" is crucial in this fight, though, suggests that his true opponent is not Yellow Jaguar, but himself. He must break the "chains" of his own "exhaustion," a reading enriched by Cooper's Igbo interpretation of Dad's various matches as his fighting his own *chi*, or spirit being (75). This aspect is further emphasized in that the narrative links the turning point within Dad to his maturation. It is after Dad unleashes his final counter-attack—and before he has actually defeated Yellow Jaguar—that he "rose miraculously in stature."

Dad's deciding life over death is a difficult matter because of yet a third opponent the narrative implicitly triangulates in this moment, suffering. Living day after day in utter poverty, watching his wife and son become increasingly emaciated, performing humiliating work as a night soil man, Dad's loyalty to his human life is no small issue. Nevertheless, as with Azaro, it is the initial, crucial step in his maturation process, his becoming a man. Both figures' development hinges upon an internal realization, their learning to see the wonders within human life which make suffering worth bearing. Dad seems to have some intimation of this correlation, for earlier he tells Azaro in exultation:

"My son [...] there is a wonderful wind blowing in my mind. The stars are playing on a flute. The air is sweet with the music of an invisible genius. Love is crying in my flesh [...]. The rain is full of flowers and their scent makes me tremble *as if I am becoming a real man*. I see great happiness in our future. I see joy. I see you walking out of the sun. [...] I see your mother as the most beautiful woman in the world." (336)

Integrated with Dad's maturation is his ability to see past their suffering to the singularly marvelous aspects of human life—the "stars," "air," "love," "rain," and his family—without becoming overwhelmed by hardship, as he admonishes Azaro shortly following: "We have sorrow here. But we also have celebration. We know the special joys" (337).

While bringing his unconscious father home from his victorious match, Azaro witnesses what he identifies as Dad's "rebirth." Dad is depicted in baby imagery: "We had to feed him pap, as if

he were the biggest newborn baby in the world. [...] He slept like a baby. He grinned like one every now and then. He howled like one. And he sometimes even betrayed the curious stare of genius that only babies and certain madmen have” (358-59). At first, it is not certain what Dad is reborn into. He simply continues with his training. Quayson, also questioning how this fight relates to “the development of the Black Tyger’s character,” suggests “the defeat of the Yellow Jaguar only serves to make him self-centered and swelled up in the belief in his invulnerability” (*Strategic* 142). If Dad is still metaphorically immature after this first fight, though, his rebirth indicates a crucial initial stage in his maturation.

Following Dad’s second major fight, this time with Green Leopard, a feared political thug, Dad changes more dramatically. Notably, he becomes obsessed with politics. “A new idealism had eaten into his brain,” Azaro describes (408). He begins making intricate plans about “his imagined country,” which include schemes for educating the homeless and beautifying the community (410). While at this point, Dad’s capacity and wisdom to follow through with these plans are shown to be less than adequate—Azaro describes Dad’s “illiterate calculations about how much it would cost to build a house, to build schools, about the population of the poor, and how much money he would need to win an election” (408-09)—his initiative is praiseworthy. It signifies a shift in his concerns comparable to the evolution of the Photographer’s character. Whereas Dad was formerly engrossed in his own affliction and that of his family’s, his concern now pans outward as he becomes consumed with helping his community and the nation. He has awakened to his wider attachments and responsibilities.

In Dad’s final match, he fights against an opponent who proves the most formidable of the three, the man in the white suit at the political celebration for the Party of the Rich at Madame Koto’s bar. After Dad intervenes on behalf of the beggars, who are being beaten at the party, the

man steps in and punches Dad. During the fight, Dad realizes this man is a being from the Land of Fighting Ghosts, but Dad is unhindered. Showing his “curious ability to reach into deep places in his spirit, a ferocious energy swirled around Dad,” and he defeats his opponent. Reminiscent of his first fight, the “energy” within Dad’s human spirit proves greater than the strength of the other worldly politician (470-74). This fight is significant within the sequence of the three, as Quayson points out, for it is prompted by a “principled defense of others”: “Black Tyger enters this fight precisely because he espouses the cause of the dispossessed represented by the beggars” (*Strategic* 143). He thus demonstrates that he has learned to channel his strength to protect the oppressed in his country.

Dad continues in this cause even after his fight. While physically unconscious, “Dad [...] roamed the spheres that restore the balances of the earth. [...] Dad’s spirit was restless for justice and more life and genuine revolution.” His active solidarity with the attachments of his natal ties, his community and nation, reflect another crucial ingredient required for his maturation, for while in the spirit courts, his physical body magically grows. While Mum and Azaro watch, “[Dad] grew in his sleep. I watched as his feet began to dangle over the edge of the bed. I saw his chest expanding, bursting his shirt. He gained weight; and when he tossed, as if riding mythical horses in his dreams, the bed would groan” (492-94). Here, Dad’s development towards manhood is a direct result of his acting in solidarity with the helpless of his community, the beggars, and, moreover, his opposing the politicians and spirits who are oppressing not only the beggars, but the entire country. It also stems from his appealing to the transcendent realm for its support of “justice,” “life,” and “genuine revolution” both within Nigeria and on earth in general.¹²

The magical phenomena transpiring during Dad's unconsciousness reflect the narrative's usage of magic as an advocate of human life. First, the supernatural brings physical growth to Dad's body, affirming his psychic development and giving him greater human power for fighting just causes. Second, Dad appeals to benevolent forces in the spirit courts for assistance in the human domain. Key in this moment, Dad does not passively rely upon transcendent powers to enact change on earth, but earnestly beseeches their direction for how the people themselves can engender it, as his use of the first person plural, *we*, demonstrates: "WHY? [...] WHAT MUST WE DO? [...] HOW DO WE BRING IT ABOUT?" (494). Dad models the appropriate orientation towards the spirit domain, one in which the supernatural undergirds the natural.

This organization of the spirit and human domains is reinforced by what Quayson describes as Dad's West African deitic filiations. Dad evokes Ogun, a god of war derived from Yoruba indigenous mythology, Quayson points out. This link is suggested by his "ferocious fighting energy" manifested in his boxing as well as his ability to hunt. Dad also reflects aspects of the Yoruba god Shango not only in his boxing associations with lighting and thunder, but also "in the fact that Dad is a stickler for justice." Quayson focuses on the way these hybrid deitic affiliations are a "strategic" use the indigenous resource-base applied to *Famished Road*'s concern with oppression (*Strategic* 140-41). It seems an additional strategic employment, however, to involve the use of this deitic-to-human transcharacterization to further reinforce the narrative's inversion of the transcendent/natural plane in a way similar to the reversal of the Heaven/earth binary seen earlier. That Dad possesses god-like qualities demonstrates the narrative's placement of transcendent capacities within humanity. This offers at least one explanation for Dad's pronouncement: "Human beings are gods hidden from themselves"

(498).¹³ Dad's god-like characteristics also function as another method of empowering human beings, encouraging their capacity to bring about transformation within the human sphere.

It is significant in this light that the only deities Dad refers to in the *Famished Road* trilogy are the gods of revolution and chaos, as seen in this moment in *Infinite Riches*:

[Dad] called upon the god of revolution, stern brother to the god of justice, to flatten the evil places of the world, to lash thunderstorms and hurricanes on all oppressors, to burn away the corruptions of the nation, to destroy the shacks and malarial abodes of the wretched, to drive their excessive tolerance of suffering from their backward lives, to goad them to rage and revolt, goad them into changing their conditions for ever, into something wonderful. (56)

In this rare moment when Dad appeals to the divine, he invokes the god of revolution, pleading not for an escape from hardship or for this entity to change their circumstances for them, but to compel, or “goad,” the people themselves to action, the result being justice and “something wonderful” on earth.

There is a final *bildungsheld* figure without whom this discussion of *Famished Road*'s treatment of becoming a man would be incomplete. This is Nigeria, the abiku nation. While in the spirit courts, “Dad found that all nations are children; it shocked him that ours too was an abiku nation, a spirit nation” (494). Nigeria, the abiku nation, is still trapped in the cycle of birth and death and so has not yet become a man, so to speak; it has not reached maturation, but continues to die young. Ade discloses this to Azaro: “‘Our country is an abiku country. Like the spirit-child, it will keep coming and going. One day it will decide to remain. It will become strong’” (478). Though currently trapped in the abiku cycle, Nigeria is not aligned with Ade as an abiku, but with Azaro, for Ade's prophecy foretells that Nigeria will eventually choose to “remain” on earth. It will mature. Soliman notes the implications of Nigeria's juxtaposition with other abiku figurations: “[...] Okri sees Nigeria as an abiku child, but significantly not an ogbanje, rather a resilient abiku who has taken the tough decision to remain alive [...]. The

implication is that Nigeria too can be a resilient abiku but only if it transcends a history and a present of nothing but conflict” (166). Jean W. Ross touches on a similar point when using the term *maturity* to discuss the abiku nation: “By the novel’s end, Azaro recognizes the similarities between the nation and the *abiku*; each is forced to make sacrifices to reach maturity and a new state of being” “(337). However, an important nuance needs to be supplemented with Ross’s reading because key to *Famished Road*’s characterization of Nigeria as an abiku is that Nigeria’s maturation is not simply contingent upon the nation’s own tenacity, but also that of the Nigerian people.

Dad intimates this shifting of responsibility when he discovers that Nigeria is an abiku “that keeps being reborn and after each birth come blood and betrayals, and the child of our will refuses to stay till we have made propitious sacrifice and displayed our serious intent to bear the weight of a unique destiny” (494). Dad is referring to that aspect of the abiku mythology in which spirit-children have the power to will their own deaths, which means relatives bear the burden of having to coax those children to stay. It is for this reason that, after Dad had treated Azaro harshly causing Azaro to nearly abandon human life, the herbalist “told Dad and Mum to be kinder to me, to not shout, not beat, not restrict me, to not quarrel amongst themselves” (*Famished* 341). Dad and Mum must try to make Azaro’s mortal attachments seem to him more alluring than his spirit ties.

As with Azaro, the nation’s natal affiliations have a profound responsibility to convince it to stay. Quayson comments on this:

Since the *abiku* is caught in a cyclical web of births, deaths and re-births, it fractures history and problematizes the unity of the materiality of events and their putative affective referents. If the country is like the *abiku*, the affective status of its history is thrown into doubt precisely because it is trapped in a grid of non-progressing motion. When Okri suggests this, however, it is not to postulate an ineluctable determinism, but rather to suggest that his country has not done enough to transcend the trauma of

unending underdevelopment or the nausea of confusion in its unfocused attempts to escape it. (*Strategic* 132)

By characterizing the nation as an abiku—one who would break the cycle and remain if it could so be convinced—*Famished Road* redirects the burden of responsibility for Nigeria's maturation onto the Nigerian people themselves. The narrative stresses this aspect much more with the abiku nation than it does with Azaro, whose characterizational revision of the abiku ethic stresses Azaro's own subjectivity and will to live, as has been seen. This distinct aspect of the abiku nation is a central aspect its character contributes to the narrative's maturation motif.

The deflection of responsibility onto Nigerians indirectly implicates them in the process of maturation. The abiku nation's temporal development is contingent upon Nigerians' internal development, their learning to value this significant natal tie and thus work towards sustaining it. What is more, the narrative suggests that the people have a stake in this dual maturation, for their destinies coincide with the nation's. That the people must demonstrate their willingness to "bear the weight of a unique destiny" refers simultaneously to Nigeria's destiny, as an abiku figure, and to the people's.

As has now been seen, the King, Azaro, the Photographer, Dad, and the abiku nation comprise a composite maturation motif. Becoming men (and women in the case of the King and the Nigerians implicated by the abiku nation) entails both a common means of maturation, care for natal attachments, as well as a common goal, man- and womanhood. *Famished Road's* protagonists, or *bildungshelds*, mature as they exhibit a realization of the lofty value of their communities of descent and tenaciously work towards sustaining and improving them. While Azaro's maturation depends upon his developing solidarity with his family and human life, and Dad's and the Photographer's emphasizes their active socio-political roles in their local community, the figure of the abiku nation underscores the responsibility of the Nigerian people

to their national attachment. Finally, the King's many instances of man- and womanhood offer a kind of organizing experience for all the others, as he models the ideal of positively transforming whatever ties into which one is born. Though different attachments are stressed by each figure, then, all of them are vernacular ties inherited by birth. While this common process through which they mature stresses particularity, though, these figures develop into a shared universal position, man- and womanhood. By identifying this as the object of maturation, *Famished Road* furnishes the fraternity of human beings as the ideal of becoming, drawing a connecting line in the developmental process from natal ties to collective humanity.

Vernacular Humanism

As I hope to show now, a crucial dimension of the narrative's maturation motif involves the issue of belonging and its integral components, identity, meaning, and place. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that analyzing characters' attachments is a tool through which one can identify the sources from which characters derive senses of belonging. Applying this insight to *Famished* illuminates a significant aspect of natal ties: communities of descent are an essential aspect in characters' formation of selfhood. This suggests that selfhood requires others, an idea that is also visible in the object *Famished Road* furnishes for maturation. Insofar as man- and womanhood is a stage of development achieved after childhood, *Famished Road* intimates that each of these characters is coming into the fullness of his own identity within the universal taxonomy of human being. Fraternity is the ideal achievement to which individual selves aspire. In this, *Famished Road* illustrates that one's own identity is found through belonging with other human beings. Individual identity is defined as self-amidst-world, the hyphens being read as signifying the inseparability between the individual and his/her social web.

Famished Road's maturation motif does more than invoke the issue of belonging: it encodes a

strategy through which belonging is achieved. Based on the aspects already explored, this strategy might best be named vernacular humanism, a term which encompasses the common process through which these characters attain a sense of belonging, their care to vernacular, natal ties, as well as the goal of belonging and identity into which they mature, the fraternity of human being. Man/womanhood might be seen to comprise a binary with natal attachments, one which parallels the polarities of the global and the vernacular, or the universal and the particular, divisions with which Rushdie's *Enchantress* also engages (chapter four). Yet, unlike Rushdie's novel which leaves these two components polarized, *Famished Road*'s maturation motif weds them in an inseparable dialectic: the global (human fraternity) requires the vernacular (care for natal ties).

Famished Road's vernacular humanist configuration of individual belonging as self-amidst-world calls to mind the cosmopolitan image of concentric circles, though a particular rendering of it. Described in chapter one, the concentric circles are an image employed in cosmopolitan theory beginning with the Greek *kosmou politês*. The rings represent progressing levels of loyalty between self and others: the first symbolizing the individual; then family and community; nation; until finally arriving at the widest sphere, humanity as a whole. The concentric circles are especially useful for representing multiple, even divergent, views of belonging. While the image remains the same (concentric circles), one's treatment of, or attitude towards, the various levels suggests what that person believes "we owe to insiders and outsiders," as Sissela Bok explains (39). In this way, viewers do not read this image as much as it reads them. Therefore, the concentric circles provide a tool for assessing specific treatments of belonging within both narrative and theory. *Famished Road*'s vernacular humanism takes seriously each representative ring, the attachments between self and whole, and this is a strength of its cosmopolitan mapping.

Its horizon of sympathy, belonging, and identity does not stop at the small rings representing local ties, but characters must nevertheless still travel through these rings in order to reach the widest level of universal man- and womanhood. This inflection of the concentric circles compares to that implicitly composed in García's *Dreaming* (chapter three), a novel which also insists upon the significance of the small rings, particularly that of the family and other intimate relationships. Both *Dreaming* and *Famished Road* diverge sharply, though, from the posture towards the concentric circles composed in Rushdie's *Enchantress*, for, as we will see, its universal cosmopolitanism urges the escape from the centripetal pull of the small-level rings, or inherited attachments.

Famished Road's depiction of belonging is aligned with that of Michael Walzer, one of many critics who responded to Nussbaum's "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" in the *Boston Review*. Walzer employs the tool of concentric circles in order to issue his criticisms against Nussbaum's articulation of cosmopolitanism:

Nussbaum's image of concentric circles is more helpful than her idea of world citizenship—precisely because it suggests how odd it is to claim that my *fundamental* allegiance is, or ought to be, to the outermost circle. My allegiances, like my relationships, start at the center. Hence we need to describe the mediations through which one reaches the outer circles, acknowledging the value of, but also passing through, the others. That is not so easy to do; it requires a concrete, sympathetic, engaged (but not absolutely engaged) account of the inner circles—and then an effort not so much to draw the outermost circle in as to open the inner ones out. (126)

Walzer, like *Famished Road*, advocates a treatment of the circles wherein one begins at the center, drawing "the inner ones out." Small-level attachments such as community and nation are the requisite "mediations" through which one reaches "the outermost circle" of universal humanity.

These points speak to the implications of *Famished Road*'s strategy of belonging at the microscopic level, how individuals might navigate the complex issue of belonging, but what

might vernacular humanism mean at a macroscopic level? How does it map the world's social solidarities? What does it suggest about how humanity is grouped together, who belongs with whom, how, and why? Because vernacular humanism extends a graduated pattern in which universal fraternity is achieved through care to inherited attachments, in *Famished Road* social solidarities start, and to a large extent remain, tethered to home. The question of who belongs with whom is (pre)determined first by birth. This is the primary filter through which people are organized. Insofar as these ties are not terminal, but permeable, the world's divergent peoples share one, single world. Nevertheless, they retain unique responsibilities, and these to their natal attachments of family, community, and nation.

In its mapping of social solidarities, *Famished Road* offers a model of cosmopolitanism which implicitly responds to Timothy Brennan's censuring of it in his *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*. In contrast to the forms of cosmopolitanism he derides which idealize "a humanist utopia of one-world culture" (3), Brennan contends for internationalism:

There is only one way to express internationalism: by defending the popular sovereignty of existing and emergent third-world polities. [...] Crippled, vexed by the dangers of excess and exclusion, smothered by the weight of ethereal images from afar, the nation is a precious site for negotiating rights and for salvaging communal traditions. (316)

While it is true that cosmopolitanism has often been seen as the antithesis of patriotism and nationalism, as is intimated in the title to Nussbaum's famous article mentioned earlier, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," Okri as well as cosmopolitan theorists Appiah and Bruce Robbins have argued for a compatibility among the nation and universal human being. Appiah advocates "cosmopolitan patriotism," as mentioned earlier, while Robbins suggests: "For better or worse, there is a growing consensus that cosmopolitanism sometimes works together with nationalism rather than in opposition to it" ("Introduction" 2).

Of course, *Famished Road*'s cartography of belonging is the narrative's ideal, a prescription

for how belonging should be configured which many characters do not achieve. While *Famished Road* has an unusual number of *bildungshelds* in relation to other *Bildungsromans*, they comprise a small minority compared to the many other characters of Azaro's community who never mature, and thus join the universal fraternity, a point which shows that most characters in *Famished Road* do not actively and self-sacrificially care for their natal ties. This indicates *Famished Road*'s general pessimism about the ability of its ideal to be achieved, and in this way compares to Rushdie's *Enchantress*, a narrative which similarly extends little hope that characters can achieve its recommended exile. Both novels encompass an ambivalence, then, in which they simultaneously extend and dismiss the strategies of belonging they construct.

Besides its suggestiveness for mapping individual belonging and global social solidarities, *Famished Road*'s strategy of belonging harnesses a particular usage of magical realist aesthetics which in turn interconnects the narrative with several extratextual discourses. *Famished Road*'s vernacular humanism ennobles the human domain. In the lexicon of magical realist aesthetics, this thematic aspect involves a specific organization of magical realism's two codes, wherein the magical elevates the real. The protagonists become crucially affiliated with the code of realism in that their maturation requires their solidarity with the domain of human being, the human attachments into which they are born, and, as will be seen momentarily, the true nation. As demonstrated by the four various ways traced above in which magic and realism are interfaced—inversion, enfoldment, advocacy, and opposition—*Famished Road* does not elevate the real at the expense of the supernatural, but, on the contrary, magic paradoxically enables this values hierarchy. Dad's and Azaro's maturation requires the supernatural: Azaro's development is aided by the King's magical assistance, while Dad's magical physical growth transpires after he defeats the political figure from the Land of Fighting Ghosts.

Admittedly, isolating this particular usage of magic and realism within a narrative in which the boundaries between spirits and humans is porous is a tricky endeavor which requires some situating. *Famished Road*'s milieu has (rightly) led critics to underline the complexity of the intermixture of the two codes. Quayson suggests that because of the myriad ways in which the narrative interconnects "the esoteric with the real, the narrative works to undermine any easy conclusions that may be arrived at from an examination of any one method of interweaving." Quayson lists at least four different ways that Okri combines the esoteric and the real: 1) the spirit world operates between real events; 2) reality and spirit worlds are strictly dichotomized; 3) reality and esoteric worlds are blurred; 4) the narrative is oriented towards both planes simultaneously, but is mainly focalized from the esoteric plane (*Strategic* 133-36).¹⁴

Besides the complex intermixture of the esoteric and the real within *Famished Road*, critics have noted that the codes of magic and realism can, in general, represent an array of referents, making it impossible to isolate a single referent for each code. In what may seem counterintuitive, Elleke Boehmer points to the way narrative magic can be used to signal not a transcendent element, but reality: "[Magical realist] writers may expose the extremities of the neo-colonial condition. The phantasmic is used to evoke an Africa or an India which has run out of food, medicine, and liberation ideals. The nightmares which jam Okri's stories make a grim point about the Third World city" (*Colonial* 242). In this sense, narrative magic refers to a harsh reality which overwhelms the limits of human conception. Conversely, one might consider the realist aspect of the mode in *Famished Road* as rooting the narrative in the gritty historico-political reality of this Nigerian community who daily combats physical hunger and, increasingly, the neocolonial political hegemony, while the magical component allows him to convey a supernatural African worldview.

Clearly, Okri pulls the threads of magic and realism together in myriad ways in this narrative, so that one might view their interaction differently at different nodal intersections of the narrative web. This is one aspect which makes *Famished Road* —and magical realism in general—so aesthetically interesting. Nevertheless, this study isolates a particular node within the web, an orientation of the codes of realism and magic wherein the latter bolsters the former, because while this is merely a single nodal point, it seems to be an especially significant one. Within the text, it informs and is informed by other nodal points, such as the moments of opposition, inversion, advocacy, and enfoldment, as has been seen. This particular node also intersects with points outside the narrative web, the extratextual discourses of contemporary African literature; humanism; and magical realist theory.

Famished Road's emphasis on the real in its vernacular humanism (the human domain and natal ties, including the nation) usefully complicates the view that African literature has been moving away from realism. In "The Nation as Metaphor in Contemporary African Literature," Boehmer makes a distinction between "the first wave of postwar, anti-colonial nationalisms in Africa" and a new generation of writers who are treating the nation in symbolic terms:

In the early years of independence, fiction, variously identified as historical or realistic, was used and shaped in the service of national politics. Now, increasingly, as the work of Okri [...] indicates, there has been a shift in the medium of realization of the nation from realistic fact into symbolic fiction. (330)

In contrast to those earlier realisms, she identifies Okri's work as "African symbolic realism" (327).¹⁵ While the former generation was "marked by what we could call the literality of implicit belief: a strong faith in the actual existence of the nation," the latter look not to "the literal truth" of the nation, but focus on "the imaginary status of nationhood" (320).

Clearly, Boehmer is correct in identifying Okri's depiction of the nation in *Famished Road* as metaphorical. She draws attention to the function of landscapes (the road and the slums) and the

photographer's "image-making," analogies that represent various aspects of Nigeria such as its historical and spiritual paths and its communities. Curiously, though, she does not address the central analogy Okri uses for the nation, the abiku, as was described earlier. While the abiku functions as an imaginative trope for the nation, it also implies a few grand and traditional claims about Nigeria, its singularity and spiritual existence, a point which destabilizes the distinction Boehmer is making between literality and metaphor.¹⁶

The "constellar concept" of the abiku, it will be recalled, involves reincarnation. An abiku spirit cycles between the spirit domain and earth; it is transient, but it nevertheless remains, throughout its incarnations, the same spirit. An abiku's personhood is both eternal and limited: its individual being never ceases existing, and it maintains a singularity and continuity. Identifying the nation as abiku, then, means these characteristics apply to it as well: Nigeria is a singular, bounded, and eternal entity. By drawing off the abiku mythos for Nigeria, *Famished Road* suggests that there is only one true nation which must be distinguished from competing versions of it.

In *Famished Road* and its sequels, *Songs of Enchantment* and *Infinite Riches*, the reader discovers that there are multiple embodiments of the Nigerian nation; however, the true abiku nation is clearly distinguished from inimical and counterfeit variants propagated by the narrative's nefarious politicians. Madame Koto is pregnant with three abikus, and in *Songs of Enchantment* the reader learns that these fetuses are the nation's antitheses. While the true abiku nation represents Nigeria's destiny, these bogus national abikus will destroy their mother, Nigeria. As Azaro foresees, these are "children who spent their lives divided, warring against each other, fighting for their mother's milk, savaging her breasts, and tearing her apart in a bizarre incestuous and greedy rage" (141-42). Deandrea suggests that the abiku trinity

symbolizes “the three main Nigerian ethnic groups” who ended up in civil war (56). That Madame Koto is pregnant with multiples is also significant in this light. In contrast to the singularity of the abiku nation, these numerous embodiments reflect fracture, dissent, and violence.

The distinction between the actual Nigerian nation and its counterfeit embodiments is suggested when Madame Koto’s abiku children are identified as “offspring that could command and concentrate the minds of men and women and nations, and possess their dreams and affect their realities” (*Songs* 141). This description associates them with the narrative’s antagonists and opponents of the true nation who are referred to as the “manufacturers of reality” (*Famished* 494). In contrast to the authentic nation, a characterization that affiliates Nigeria with reality and the code of realism, the rest are manufactured, and in this way affiliated with the code of magic.

The abiku nation’s personhood, its pre-existent and singular identity, means that Okri is not representing Nigeria as infinitely pliable, as Boehmer suggests. While not downplaying the value of “nationalist narratives” for postcolonial peoples, she nevertheless argues that Okri, among the other authors she is describing, depicts the nation as “not one path of self-realization only, one historical vector of development, but any number of symbolic fictions, as many and more modes of redreaming as there are dreamers in the nation” (330).¹⁷ But this sounds more like a synopsis of Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* than *Famished Road*. Rushdie’s narrator Saleem is vexed by the many voices of India’s children, thus suggesting the impossibility of locating a homogenous national identity. However, *Famished Road*’s juxtaposition of the true spirit-nation against maligned and counterfeit national figurations works against such a pluralist reading.

By depicting the nation as an abiku, *Famished Road*’s imagined community intersects with some traditional ideas about the modern nation-state, its literal (if immaterial), bounded, and

eternal existence. Not only does it evoke Ernest Renan's emphasis on the immaterial nature of the nation—"A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" (17)—but also the imagined eternality of the nation as explained by Benedict Anderson: "If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future" (11-12). The abiku phenomenon provides a myth of origins for Nigeria which posits its beginnings in the "immemorial past." In this way, *Famished Road* functions as a genesis text proffering Nigeria's ancient historical roots.

Furthermore, the narrative's reliance upon West African mythology, if "strategically" utilized as Quayson describes, proffers an indigenous origin for Nigeria. This makes *Famished Road* representative of a host of magical realist texts which, according to Wen-chin Ouyang, have enacted a political function by drawing upon ancient, local mythologies for the source of their magic: "Magical realism [...] has been producing political discourses that partake in imagining communities as 'limited, sovereign' nations with roots in 'time immemorial' derived from what are often termed 'local' or 'indigenous' myths, religions and cultures" (225). While the backdrop to this chapter, indeed this study, is *Famished Road*'s use of magical realism to construct a strategy of belonging, this summational functionality of the mode can also be identified in Okri's deployment of the mode for presenting a particular figuration of Nigeria.

While it is evident that *Famished Road* differs modally from realist novels, Okri's narrative exhibits aspects which provide significant points of continuity among mid to late twentieth-century African realist and non-realist narratives. One of these is its traditional political dimension, the way it works towards a distinct national identity, or destiny, while compelling Nigerians to fulfill their unique responsibility to their national community of descent. Also, in

Okri's presenting the nation as an abiku, the narrative's national figuration vacillates between symbolic and literal, immaterial and material, in a way that encompasses all of these aspects simultaneously, making it difficult to distinguish one from the other. Finally, the nation's literality, its actual existence, if one that defies a naturalist worldview of reality, combines with *Famished Road*'s general elevation of the code of realism held out through its vernacular humanist strategy of belonging.

Other Humanisms

As has now been seen at length, *Famished Road*'s vernacular humanist strategy of belonging encompasses a pattern in which the universal fraternity of humanity is achieved through care to natal attachments. This is a crucial thematic aspect of the narrative, and one which is extended through magical realist aesthetics. *Famished Road*'s strategy relies upon a supernaturally buttressed realism, wherein realism refers to the domain of human being, natal attachments, and the true nation. This employment of the supernatural and the real constructs a humanist discourse, an aspect of the narrative's strategy of belonging signaled by the second term of the strategy's nomenclature and one which has received little critical attention in Okri's writing.¹⁸

To begin locating the sense of human being extended in *Famished Road*, it is helpful to juxtapose it with a contrasting model dramatized in another novel analyzed in this study, Rushdie's *Enchantress*. *Enchantress*'s inflection of human being is summed up in its declaration: "'This may be the curse of the human race, [...] not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike'" (137). Here "the human race" references a flawed nature shared by all people (which is why it is a "curse"). Ironically, however, most characters exclude those outside their natal attachments because they do not realize their actual similitude. Those few characters who do perceive this truth about humanity's likeness must try to escape the xenophobia and

arrogance of their closed-minded counterparts. In Rushdie's novel, human nature is a given, despite the fact that most characters do not realize it, while in *Famished Road* universal humanity is something which must be achieved—though most characters do not—and this only through their active solidarity to vernacular attachments. The relationship between universal humanity and particularist attachments moves in opposing directions in the two novels, then, for in *Enchantress*, tradition and particularist attachments hinder universal humankind, while in *Famished Road* one only becomes fully human through them. Though, as mentioned, the novels merge in their common low expectations of the mass's ability to position itself appropriately in relation to a common humanity.

Besides its juxtaposition with *Enchantress*, *Famished Road*'s variant of humanism links the narrative to other humanist discourses. The vernacular component of its humanism as well as its retention of the ideal of human subjectivity implicitly critiques the humanism of colonialists, while narrowing in on the dehumanizing practices of Nigeria's neocolonial political regimes. Furthermore, by holding out human agency and people's ability to affect history the narrative urges ordinary Nigerians to reclaim their lives and their nation's true destiny.

The concept of man advanced by colonial humanists deceptively suggested an all-inclusive ambit while belying what was in actuality a select portion of human beings. As Newell describes, "he was a European, Christian prototype whose cultural attributes were mistakenly presumed to be universal" (173). Man in this context, to borrow from Jean-Paul Sartre, referred to "that very exclusive club, our species" (18). The exclusions within colonial humanism become pronounced when considering the negative side of this variation of man, the way that persons outside this designated gender and geographical local were perceived to be not yet fully human, but had to be made so. Newell recounts that "a central assumption" in colonial humanist thought "was that, if

they were also to become ‘men,’ Africans should be made capable of receiving ‘civilization’” (173). Like *Famished Road*, then, colonial humanists suggested manhood required a process of becoming. In contrast to *Famished Road*, however, becoming a man in these terms involved a process of cultural homogenization, if one which was always irresolute, simultaneously offering and denying universal fraternity, for as their criteria for manhood suggests, the colonized could clearly never fully achieve equal stature.

Colonial humanism’s restrictive definition of manhood offers a defense for *Famished Road*’s asymmetrical focus on becoming a man, as opposed to becoming a woman. At the same time, one is left to wonder why the narrative’s response is left incomplete? *Famished Road* counters colonial humanism’s exclusions of geography and culture, but the issue of gender remains weakly handled. On the one hand, *Famished Road*’s maturation motif does include women in the King’s feminine embodiments and the Nigerian people (conveyed through the abiku nation). On the other, it excludes a figure who seems a likely candidate for the narrative’s group of *bildungshelds* because of her central role in the novel, Azaro’s mum. In moments Mum is depicted as a forceful figure, such as when she attacks the political thugs in the market (168-70). She works equally hard as Dad to provide for the family, daily selling her wares in the dust and scorching heat. Yet, she does not find a place among the group of humanist heroes. Her character remains static throughout the narrative; she is associated with neither physical nor spiritual development. As if Okri later recognizes this gender slant, Mum’s character does increasingly acquire a social role in the subsequent novels. Also, other important female figures are added to these later novels’ small group of heroic figures, such as Mum’s eight friends who help free Dad from prison (*Infinite* 65) and the old woman in the forest who weaves the tapestry of Nigeria’s past and future and serves as the foil to the colonial Governor-General (*Infinite* 102-08).

Despite the narrative's limitation in this aspect, what I want to draw attention to here is that *Famished Road* forges a response to colonial humanism, and it does this, furthermore, by retaining the ideal of human being, not by abandoning it. Okri's novel revises the false universals of Eurocentric humanism by (potentially) extending the status of human being to Nigerians, people historically (not only theoretically) denied it during the slave trade and colonization.¹⁹ This methodology can be contrasted to the way many theorists have countered humanism's flaws by rejecting human being altogether, adopting a philosophical stance of anti-humanism. Richard Pithouse calls attention to the way that humanism has become "a deeply unfavorable idea in the academy" (108). Martin Halliwell and Andy Mousley offer an explanation for this state of affairs in their *Critical Humanisms: Humanist/Anti-Humanist Dialogues* (2003), where they contend with anti-foundationalists', or anti-humanists', monolithic depiction of humanism by providing a textured historical overview of modern and postmodern embodiments of it.

Halliwell and Mousley sketch three phases comprising "a tradition of anti-humanist thought," the most recent of which is "the high period of critical theory's anti-humanism," the 1970s and 80s (the decades just preceding *Famished Road*'s publication in 1991):

Such British and American popularizers and translators of French theory as Catherine Belsey, Geoffrey Bennington, Terence Hawkes, and Christopher Norris (in Britain) and Peggy Kamuf, J. Hillis Miller, and Paul Rabinow (in America) helped to shape the complex strands of French poststructuralist thought into a narrative that treated logocentrism, phallogentrism, and humanism as the cardinal sins of Western metaphysics. (5-6)

Halliwell and Mousley argue that anti-humanists have tended to understand humanism as limited to the classical, or liberal, model of humanism, instead of being composed of diverse, critical strains, an understanding which contributed to the latter's outright denouncement of it: "We are not simply suggesting that critical theory's version of humanism is a pure invention, but that humanism has been tidied up, packaged and streamlined by some anti-humanists in such a way

as to negate its actual diversity.” Halliwell and Mousley also contend with essentialist variants of humanism, but, by contrast, insist upon the value of retaining humanism in its critical forms.

Famished Road offers a literary example of a complication of classical (liberal) humanism. According to Halliwell and Mousley, the three key premises of this former model are “the sovereignty of the subject [...]; the transparency of language; and rationalism.”²⁰ The last aspect, rationalism, “rests upon an Enlightenment view of human reason and understanding as perfectible” and is reflected in Kant, they suggest: “Such is Kant’s Enlightenment faith in human reason that he believes the independent use of one’s reason will lead to an undistorted understanding of reality.” While Halliwell and Mousley clarify that “faith in the march of human reason towards perfection” is not the only way to understand Enlightenment thought, it was a significant humanist target for “a largely French and post-structuralist” body of critical theorists due to its “inflated and uncritical view of human capacities” (3-4). This essentialist and aggrandized view of human rationality contrasts with *Famished Road*’s humanism, which insists upon the limited understanding of humans and the often enigmatic nature of human experience. “Human beings” themselves “are a great mystery,” Dad proclaims (499). Stemming from this, the process of maturation in *Famished Road* is not at all one of the progress of reason, but progress in webs of human relationship and responsibility. Though, *Famished Road*’s humanism shares with this picture of Enlightenment humanism—and thus the criticism of anti-humanists—an exalted, or “inflated,” view of human capacities, as was seen in the way the King’s character intimates that all human attachments can/should be positively transformed.

Okri’s humanism in *Famished Road* unites him with other postcolonial humanists who are reluctant to discard human being. African-American scholar Lewis Gordon suggests that many

cannot afford to reject the ideal of human being, criticizing as deeply dubious postmodernists' "recent declarations of the death of 'man' and humanism in postmodern thought":

It is not only African-American moderns, but also African-American postmoderns like Cornel West and Patricia Hill Collins, who find such declarations difficult to stomach. West and Collins consider themselves humanists for obvious reasons; dominant groups can "give up" humanism for the simple fact that *their humanity* is presumed, while other communities have struggled too long for the humanistic prize. To tell them that the human being is passé is to render them too late on the scene [...].

Gordon insists on preserving human being because it is an ideal that motivates oppressed peoples to rally in resistance against oppression. Edward Said echoes this in his collection of lectures,

Humanism and Democratic Criticism (2004):

[...] as a fair degree of my own political and social activism has assured me, people all over the world can be and are moved by ideals of justice and equality—the South African victory in the liberation struggle is a perfect case in point—and the affiliated notion that humanistic ideals of liberty and learning still supply most disadvantaged people with the energy to resist unjust war and military occupation, for instance, and to try to overturn despotism and tyranny, both strike me as ideas that are alive and well. (10)

These examples offer evidence of humanism in action which undermines anti-humanism on a practical level: it demonstrates its pervasive and successful deployment.

Inversely, it is the disconnection in classical (liberal) humanism between theory, or ideal, and praxis which enables postcolonial humanists to retain a modified form of humanism while showing up the false universals within colonial humanism. Robert Bernasconi argues that it is not the ideals of humanism which corrupted racist humanists, but that "the old humanism separated theory from practice. Its announced goals were less a call for action than fine phrases concealing the true nature of the system of exploitation it helped to sustain. The new humanism would already be different if it was a praxis" (115). Maintaining the value of humanity instead of rejecting it altogether, the old "baby and the bathwater" axiom, anti-colonial humanists (who are

here distinguished from many post-colonial theorists) have appropriated the ideals of European humanism:

[Fanon], and other anti-colonial thinkers like Aimé Césaire, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Memmi and Steve Biko, were fully aware that humanism had been used as a legitimating ideology for racism and colonialism. However, unlike most postmodernists and post-colonialists—none of whom has offered an enabling alternative to the humanism that drove the anti-colonial project—they did not see this as a reason for opposing humanism. Their view was that this was a perverted form of humanism as it objectified the bulk of humanity [...]. The anti-colonial humanists thought that the solution was to retain the idea of humanism but to expand it to include all of humanity. (Pithouse 110)

Said employs a similar argument, contending “that attacking the abuses of something is not the same thing as dismissing or entirely destroying that thing. So, in my opinion, it has been the abuse of humanism that discredits some of humanism’s practitioners without discrediting humanism itself” (13).

In preserving ideals formerly employed by racists, anti- and postcolonial humanists, a group in which I am situating Okri, can be seen as enacting a double gesture. They both affirm core aspects of humanism—the equal and equalizing aspects of humanity—and issue a severe criticism against it. Their more complete use of the colonizers’ own standards accentuates the latter’s exclusions and pretense, their failure to practice the values they themselves professed.

While these aspects of humanism are implicitly addressed in *Famished Road*, in its construction of an alternative picture of what becoming a man entails, Okri’s narrative explicitly addresses, and focuses upon, the violations of human subjectivity by the neocolonial characters comprising the Parties of the Rich and Poor. In juxtaposition to the protagonists’, or *bildungshelds*’, affiliation with human being, Okri conflates the nefarious antagonists with spirits. He depicts them as corporeally, and therefore literally, dehumanized, thereby denouncing their dehumanizing treatment of the Nigerian people. In so doing, he reveals the continuity among the new political regimes of post-independence Nigeria and their colonial predecessors,

those who likewise denied human being—who dehumanized—Nigerian people. This linkage encompasses one of the narrative’s most biting critiques issued against the former group.

If there is any single space within *Famished Road*’s narrative cartography in which the worlds of the political, supernatural, and natural most pronouncedly overlap, it is Madame Koto’s bar. Hence, this is the locus where the merging of political and spiritual ontologies is revealed. Originally a place for community members such as Dad to enjoy Madame Koto’s renowned palm wine and pepper soup, as Madame Koto begins ascending in the Party of the Rich, this location becomes an exclusive meeting place for party members. Additionally, Madame Koto’s powerful occultism makes her bar a site heavily trafficked by bizarre spirits. Focalized through the gifted vision of the spirit-child, Azaro, the reader witnesses the way that the two dimensions of the spiritual and political develop in tandem in the bar until, ultimately, converging at the end of the novel.

Upon an early visit to her bar, Azaro has an uncanny encounter with several very strange customers. “I was surprised,” Azaro exclaims, “but when I sat down my surprise turned to bewilderment. The people in the bar were stranger than any I had seen before” (106). He describes the eccentricity of one particular couple: “Their legs were very long. The rest of their bodies were quite short. They had small heads and eyes that were so tiny that it was only when they came near me that I could perceive their pin-point brightness.” When they are seated, Azaro notices: “They had the longest necks I had yet seen on any human beings.” Unable to ascertain why these customers are so odd—they are spirits in human bodies—Azaro asks the couple: “Are you politicians?” (107). On one level, this is a tongue-in-cheek moment in which Okri plays with both the ignorance and frankness of children. On the other hand, politicians have just recently made their appearance in Azaro’s ghetto, as is clear from the fact that Azaro documents the day

when The Party of the Rich delivers rotten milk to the community as “that Saturday when politics made its first public appearance in our lives” (127). Azaro and the community members are equally naïve about the politicians for this reason; both must determine what nature of people these are, though in the bar Azaro reveals that he has already figured out they are odious. His association of the spirits with politicians hints at their mutual noxiousness.

Soon after this conversation, some of these bizarre customers kidnap Azaro, at which point Azaro again conflates the spirits with politicians when he cries out: “Politicians! Politicians are taking me away!” (111). This instance in the bar is one of numerous times in the novel when Azaro is kidnapped by spirits attempting to return him to the spirit world by force. They are to him a constant threat. Because it is in Madame Koto’s bar that these spirit-humans most often congregate, this location is itself dangerous to Azaro.

The transition in the bar from spirit customers to political clientele affiliates the two groups through shared geography. This spatial-characterization overlap is shown to have merged completely, however, at the end of the novel during the big political celebration at Madame Koto’s bar. This is something Azaro notices to his great alarm while everyone is dancing:

In the terrible heat of the dance I saw that, among the erotic dancers, the politicians and chiefs, the power merchants, the cultists, paid supporters, thugs and prostitutes, all moving to the beat of the new music, among them all, there were strangers to the world of the living. I saw that some of the prostitutes, who would be future brides of decadent power, had legs of goats. [...] Some of the politicians and power merchants, the chiefs and innocent-looking men, who were satyrs and minotaurs and satanists, had the cloven hoofs of bulls. [...] Fully clothed, they danced to the music of ascendant power. Everything around me seemed to be changing and yielding its form. I cried out. (459-60)

At this point, the loose association intimated by Azaro’s early premonition in the bar proves not childish naivety at all, but clairvoyance, affirming his supernatural insight as an abiku, for the hybridization of spirits and politicians into spirit-politicians has now been made explicit.²¹

What is the significance of this amalgamation of characters, the first group of grotesque spirits and the second group of better disguised, political spirits? Critics have rightly been drawn to *Famished Road*'s correlation of the political and the supernatural.²² The entry on Okri and his Booker Prize winning novel in *Contemporary Authors* explains: "[Azaro's] struggle to free himself from the spirit realm is paralleled by his father's immersion into politics to fight the oppression of the poor" (337).²³ But why the parallel? What does the narrative gain from it? It indicates that the party members and certain spirits belong together, both on a literal level—as their conjoined bodies attest—and on a functional level—their roles are associated.

In one sense, the spirits and politicians parallel each other; as the geometry suggests, they run alongside each other, moving similarly, but do not actually meet. Just as the spirits pose a threat to Azaro, so too are the politicians threatening to the Nigerian nation. This suggests an inverse parallelism, the way the protagonists also overlap. Azaro is like Nigeria, and so in certain respects stands in as an allegorical figure for the nation. Thus, when Azaro was kidnapped and cried out that "politicians" were taking him away, the narrative is signifying not only the spirits' capture of this abiku child, but also the way that politicians are seizing Nigeria.

The hybridization of characters combines the spirit and human domains in a way that moves beyond mere comparison and allegory, though, ontologically amalgamating the two. With this, the spirits and politicians do not only run parallel to each other, but intersect. The narrative demarcates certain antagonists (the dancers, politicians, chiefs, cultists, paid supporters, thugs, and prostitutes) with a particular usage of the supernatural code, spirit-human hybridization. Their corporeality is a bizarre combination of human limbs with goat legs, human flesh with "satyrs and minotaurs and satanists." This hybridization does not only occur at the party scene, but the narrative alludes to it in other instances, such as when Azaro refers to "the animal

expressions” in a pair of thug’s eyes who had just killed a man in the forest for opposing their party (220). Also, the old man’s voice is described as “unnatural” (320).

This bodily intermixture differs from the way Azaro is affiliated with the supernatural as an abiku, or spirit-human child, for Azaro clings to his humanity, repudiating that part of his spirit nature which would force him to abandon it. It also differs from Dad’s affiliation with animals through his fighting name, Black Tyger. Dad’s name associates him with the elemental forces of the earth through which he fights on behalf of the oppressed, both of which link him to the realm of human being. An example of this occurs during Dad’s fight with Yellow Jaguar. Initially Dad is being badly beaten, but he begins “transforming” by “going back to simple things [...] to water, to the earth, to the road, to soft things” (357). While Azaro and Dad are moving towards human being and the support of their human attachments, through the technique of hybridization Okri distances the political hegemony from human being.

Key to the antagonists’ spirit-human amalgamation is the narrative’s use of it to underline their inhumane treatment of the Nigerian people through violence and the abuse of power. It achieves this, first, through their hybridization, a technique which distances them from human being, or dehumanizes them. In *Famished Road*, dehumanization occurs in two directions: the politicians are depicted as dehumanized and they themselves dehumanize their compatriots. Azaro refers to the spirit-politicians as “part-time human beings, those who would wreck our hopes for two generations.” (461). He thus links their (only) partial humanity with their harmful effects on Nigeria(ns). Elsewhere, Azaro signals their dehumanizing treatment of the community. When the politicians hand out rotten milk to his impoverished neighbors, Azaro describes: “[...] milk spilt everywhere and powdered the faces of the women and children. With their sweating, milk-powdered faces they looked like starving spirits” (124). The community, in their

oppression, are demoted from women and children to “starving spirits,” an implicit link with the spirit-politicians who are exploiting them.

The returning of dehumanization on the dehumanizer is a concept made literal in *Famished Road* through the corporeality of the hybrid spirit-politicians. This technique of literalization is one Faris identifies as characteristic within magical realist literature. It is a “micro-textual instance” of magical realism’s tendency to bridge “physical and discursive worlds.” She describes this as moments “when the reader is induced to participate in a particular kind of verbal magic whereby the metaphorical is imagined to be literal, connecting words and the world” (110). While she does not specifically address the aspect of politicians as avatars of dehumanization as I have done here, Faris does identify the presence of “literalizing verbal magic” in *Famished Road*, “whose title becomes a metaphor for the process of interweaving different worlds because the narrator repeatedly travels along a road between the forest of the spirits and the village of his family” (*Ordinary* 112). The concept driving this instance of *Famished Road*’s use of this literary tool in the politicians’ hybridity is the ideal of human being, which the politicians have violated. Their dehumanized physicality negatively underscores the narrative’s humanism. Furthermore, it is this aspect that affiliates the Nigerians comprising these nefarious political parties with their colonial predecessors.

Beyond using the supernatural as a mechanism of literary verbal magic, the politicians are affiliated with the supernatural in their occult practices, an intersection most visible in Madame Koto.²⁴ Azaro realizes that the occultists are constituents of the parties of the Rich and Poor one night, as the warring groups were “fighting for the future of our country in the air”:

The political parties waged their battles in the spirit spaces, beyond the realm of our earthly worries. They fought and hurled counter-mythologies at one another. Herbalists, sorcerers, wizards and witches took sides and as the trucks fought for votes in the streets they fought for supremacy in the world of spirits. They called on djinns and chimeras,

succubi, incubi and apparitions; they enlisted the ghosts of old warriors and politicians and strategists; they hired expatriate spirits. The Party of the Rich drew support from the spirits of the Western world. [...] In that realm the sorcerers of party politics unleashed thunder [...]. (495)

The politicians and occultists are shown to be working in collusion with each other to exploit the country. As Deandrea points out, besides the geography of the market and the forest being associated with the spirit-world,

the other location of maximum interpenetration between real and spirit dimensions is undoubtedly that of party politics, where humans clash with ruthless violence throughout the novels. [...] the converts of the Party of the Rich—and later both parties—exploit ancestral supernatural powers for their own purposes [...]. (54)²⁵

Not only are politicians aligned with the supernatural through corporeal hybridization, then, but also through their abuse of “ancestral supernatural powers.”

Okri’s fictional dramatization of “the sorcerers of party politics” parallels a criticism of the extratextual world issued by Harry Garuba against the instrumentalization of animist beliefs by sociopolitical African elite. Garuba explains that in addition to being used as a “literary practice,” the animist worldview is employed to malign political ends:

[...] in the social world of human relationships, and economic and political activity, the mediating meanings that animist thought posits as the currency of social exchange are instrumentalized, more often than not in ways that serve only local elites and leaders. While the traditional elites do this by incorporating the instruments of modernity into traditional ritual practices, the new elites who control the economic and political power within the modern state often prey upon the animist unconscious for spurious cultural instruments to bolster their authority and legitimacy. (284-85)

This historical example shows the shortcomings of the particularist view of magical realism, wherein indigenous magic is interpreted as the heroic agent subverting Western paradigms. That framework oversimplifies, and romanticizes, autochthonous supernatural beliefs, and would therefore be unable to take into account *Famished Road*’s narrative dramatization of the exploitation of the occult by the narrative’s political hegemony.

There is a third dimension to the narrative's humanism which can be added to its response to colonial humanism's exclusions and neocolonial Nigerians' dehumanizing behavior. In the face of political and spiritual oppression, *Famished Road* urges the latent power of human agency, Nigerians' ability to engender positive transformation. Conversely, it condemns passive submission to the transcendent domain and/or political occultists. Despite their physical lack, Nigerians, and this community in particular, can employ their volition to defeat those who exploit them. In this way, the human will, what the narrative refers to as "hunger," becomes the weapon of the poor. Dad entreats the community, "TRANSFORM YOUR HUNGER INTO POWER!" (420). Later, Azaro laments: "And those of us who were poor, who had no great powers on our side, and who didn't see the power of our own hunger, a power that would frighten the gods, found that our dreams became locked out of the freedom of the air " (496). This is a key passage for understanding the potential the novel confers on the human will, and one which recalls the interfacing of magic and realism as inversion. While the political parties have the supernatural power of the occult on their side, the poor have the power of hunger (human will, agency, and desire), and it is the latter that trumps the former, this passage suggests, for the force of their hunger could frighten even the gods. On the other hand, when Dad yells: "'That is why our road is hungry [...]. We have no desire to change things!'" (451), Okri is interweaving different associations of the word *hunger* in order to speak to the way people's lack of desire and volition (hunger) makes Nigeria's metaphorical path dangerous to them (their road is hungry), an aspect which invokes the title of the novel, *The Famished Road*. Their apathy is what Dad refers to elsewhere as "the poverty of our will" (448), again teasing out a connotation of *hunger*, to refer to both a physical and spiritual condition of the impoverished.

Famished Road's denouncement of characters' apathy is pointed. Dad "criticized the people of the ghetto [...] for their almost inhuman delight in their own poverty" (419). In *Songs*, Dad asserts: "Poverty makes people strange, it makes their eyes bitter, it turns good people into witches and wizards" (121). Okri links the regular community members with both dehumanization, by the words "inhuman" and "strange," and with the occultists, "witches and wizards." This affiliation distributes some of the blame placed on the political hegemony onto the citizens themselves, the latter of whom, *Famished Road* implies, enable the former through their passivity. Additionally, as with the antagonists, this link is a mechanism through which the narrative distances the citizens from the ideal of human being in their failure to marshal their powerful agency.

While the association among *Famished Road* and postcolonial humanism has been noted, *Famished Road*'s humanism also aligns the narrative with a distinct West African tradition of it. According to Newell: "Proceeding from an affirmation of human subjectivity, and assuming an individual's capacity to produce history, West African literature and theory remain solidly humanist in orientation" (212). *Famished Road* exhibits "an affirmation" of subjectivity in its denouncement of dehumanization and its appeal to the ideal of human being, man- and womanhood. The belief in the "individual's" ability to "produce history," furthermore, is evinced in its enjoining Nigerians to oppose oppression and bring about positive transformation for their communities and nation.

Newell traces West African humanism through *négritude* intellectuals, particularly Senghor, arguing that their texts be re-read for the promotion of humanist elements:

Senghor's contribution to West African theories of identity was his affirmation of the primacy of the human subject without erasing the concept of cultural specificity. His model of humanism is different from liberal humanism in that a culture's alterity, or complementarity, is affirmed within the context of a broader shared humanity. (211)

Complementarity, a term Newell borrows from Caroline Rooney, refers to a space in which multiple layers are allowed to co-exist in a neither totalizing nor relativistic framework.²⁶ Newell expands further:

The sheer number of West African authors and intellectuals to promote “complementarity” since the 1940s indicates the existence of [...] a powerful alternative humanism in the region. Here is an intellectual tradition with roots that extend deeply into the African past and which also connects with current “third-generation” writing. Founded on the idea of specificity, this humanism does not draw inspiration from the old liberal universals so influentially loathed by Achebe. Rather, this ethical alternative derives from West Africans’ strong sense of “the local in the global,” or the “particular in the universal” [...]. (212)

While Newell does not explicitly engage with Okri as a humanist, an association this chapter makes explicitly and at length, her point about the continuity between third and first generation writers in terms of their humanism implies him, as Okri is a member of that latter group.

More importantly, *Famished Road* evinces the characteristics Newell details here. Okri’s narrative dramatizes its own variation of the local/global or particular/universal dialectic in its vernacular humanist strategy of belonging, a depiction of human being as the product of caring for natal attachments. As has now been seen, *Famished Road*’s humanism recuperates the ideal of human being within colonial humanism. The counter model it extends acts as a bulwark against the latter’s false universals, the way it would conflate specific attributes with humanity as a whole, for in *Famished Road* human being is only achieved through one’s sustained care to his/her vernacular ties. Active specificity is a requisite component of human being.

In delineating *Famished Road*’s humanism in correlation to other extratextual loci, we might now narrow in even further on its relational position, for *Famished Road*’s ideals are extended through the particular literary aesthetic of magical realism. In this, Okri’s novel can be linked to a transatlantic West African-Caribbean humanism found in the work of Carpentier (from Cuba)

and Alexis (from Haiti), figures who similarly utilized narrative magic to emphasize the marvels of reality, what Carpentier neologizes *lo real maravilloso*.

lo real maravilloso

As if to match the lavishness of the ontology that is *Famished Road*'s storyworld, critics have bestowed the novel with an abundance of classificatory nomenclatures: magical realism, spiritual realism, symbolic realism, animist realism, and shamanic realism, among others. This plethora of terms indicates critical disagreement over the appropriate taxonomy for the novel, an aspect Christopher Warnes has noted: "One of the most pressing concerns facing the critic commenting on *The Famished Road* (1991) has been the question of where to locate the work in terms of the existing narrative traditions" (124).²⁷ Before getting to specific points of contention in this debate, it is worth underscoring the way the terms in this list overlap, and thus indicate implicit agreement, at two points: 1) the second word of the term signifying the novel's realism, suggesting consensus on the text's profound concern with reality and 2) the novel's supra-realism, as the modifiers "magical," "spiritual," "symbolic," "animist," and "shamanic" indicate. What is debated is what realism's specific corresponding modifier should be.

Another way to organize this debate is between the supporters and opponents of magical realism as a modal classification. On the whole, critics recognize the association between the novel and magical realism, but then bifurcate into those who link the novel to that literary mode and those who distance the novel from it. The latter group often express concern that identifying the novel as magical realism effaces its cultural specificity, including its expression of a Nigerian worldview. Both the author's and the narrative's proximity to the autochthonous is a key criteria by which critics (and Okri himself) judge *Famished Road*'s magical realist status.

Boehmer has designated *Famished Road* both “symbolic realism” and “spiritual realism” (“Nation” 327; *Colonial* 243). In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* she acknowledges, on one hand, the link between Okri’s novel and magical realism when identifying a transnational affiliation among postcolonial migrant writers in English, a group in which she includes Rushdie, Ghosh, B. Koko Laing, and M. K. Vassanji, all of whom “have on occasion borrowed extensively from Latin American magic realism, though [...] adapting and embellishing its techniques for their own particular needs.” The works of these authors, she explains, share certain characteristics such as “combin[ing] the supernatural with local legend and imagery derived from colonialist cultures” (235). On the other hand, Boehmer distinguishes Okri from magical realists based on the criteria of what one might call true faith: “However, others—Okri is here the most obvious example—take the supernatural more seriously, less as device than as actual mystery, a distortion of the real which is a part of lived experience” (236). Okri’s beliefs as an individual, the way he “takes the supernatural more seriously,” suggest the rationale behind her finally settling down on the classificatory term “spiritual realism” for his writing (243). Though, she later intimates a second reason when she explicitly uses the term while arguing that the indigenous material within Okri’s work can be seen to exemplify a “hermeneutic space” which is inaccessible to a Western reader, “an *untranslatable* strangeness” (242-43). Spiritual in this sense connotes the intangible, that which lies beyond the grasp of a (large) portion of the novel’s readership.

Boehmer expresses an appropriate critical sensitivity towards the novel’s particularity, evincing respect for and a “serious” treatment of the vernacular worldview expressed in the narrative. This is an attribute which recent critics of magical realism have seemed largely to lack in their refusal to see the mode as constructing alternate worldviews, as discussed previously,

and this despite the mode's close correlation with this aspect in its Latin American literary genesis (notably in Carpentier and Asturias). While this deficiency in magical realist criticism is now beginning to be addressed, thanks to critics such as Faris and Warnes, one might identify it as the cause behind Boehmer's rejection of the term magical realism for Okri's writing, for she seems to assume that magical realism is antithetical to actual extratextual worldviews, that this literary aesthetic cannot take the supernatural "seriously."

For Olatubosun Ogunsanwo, Cooper's *Magical Realism in West African Fiction* exhibits just such an example of this. Ogunsanwo contends that Cooper neglects the specific animist worldview reflected in *Famished Road*:

Whatever is "magical" in all these novels under consideration can be said to derive essentially from their authors' portrayal of "animism" that underlies African religious belief and informs the mythopoeisis of their fictions, and so deserves an in-depth analysis in any examination of magical realism. (228)

He then suggests Quayson's *Strategic Transformations* does a better job of addressing the novel's indigenous supernatural aspects. However, while in *Strategic* Quayson examines *Famished Road* solely in terms of its "animist realism," though a type which "should be read more as a literary defamiliarization of indigenous beliefs than a true replica of such beliefs in reality," he has more recently developed a view of the novel's place among international magical realism (148-49). In his "Magical Realism and the African Novel" (2009), he situates Okri squarely in a tradition of magical realism, though a distinctly African branch of it which he characterizes by equivalence and liminality.

As for Cooper, in the conclusion of her analysis of *Famished Road*, she calls into question the suitability of magical realism as a modal framework for the narrative because of the way it is "ambivalent" towards indigenous values, worldviews, and the national project. Like Boehmer, Cooper's issue with the novel deals largely with the question of Okri's proximity to the West

African worldview, though, unlike Boehmer, this presents a problem for Cooper, who advocates a form of cosmopolitan detachment and syncretism. The essential aspect of a magical realist text, according to Cooper, is the author's ironical point of view, which in her assessment Okri does not clearly maintain:

[...] "ironic" is the keyword for its author's point of view. [...] it is neither possible nor appropriate for magical realist writers to present in an unmediated, undistanced way, the pre-scientific view of the world that some of their characters may hold. The gulf between the peasant's and the writer's point of view is a critical space where the negotiations between magic and realism take place. (33)

Coming from opposite directions, then, Cooper and Boehmer concur that magical realist authors are not (or should not be) true believers.

In a final critical example, Jude Chudi Okpala emphatically rejects magical realism as a descriptor for Okri's writing: "To use magic realism in reading Okri's novels simply depoliticizes and traduces them; it weakens and uproots their cultural difference from the West's own semblance" (147). He is concerned that because "Okri wants to show that Nigerians understand abiku as an integral part of their worldview," their "animist metaphysics," "it is this worldview that critics have to investigate to interpret Okri." "Magic realism as a concept cannot capture the true essence of this world" Okpala flatly contends (149).

Okpala, as well as these other critics, raises a valid concern. Because magical realism is now frequently used to signify a mode that has, since its popularizing and formative Latin American manifestations, become internationally adopted, the neglect of cultural specificity is certainly a risk (as with any comparative framework).²⁸ Nevertheless, to swing too far in the other direction and insist on a purist, indigenous West African interpretation of *Famished Road* is to close one's eyes to the diverse cultural, metaphysical, and aesthetic threads woven into the fabric of the novel. Azaro cannot be seen as an exclusively indigenous figure as an abiku. Besides Okri's

adaptation of the abiku with his character, as has been seen, his name is associated in the narrative with the New Testament's Lazarus, whom Christ raised from the dead (8).²⁹ Derek Wright underscores the novel's myriad intertextual linkages: "Okri's sources are legion: the magical metamorphoses of Ovid and Apuleius; the lurid apocalyptic imagery of *Revelations* and Biblical Apocrypha; the eroded ontologies of fantastic and fantasy fiction (Borges, Márquez, Mervyn Peake, the Kafka of the stories); and, of course, Amos Tutuola and indigenous oral narrative" (328). Moreover, the pattern of the universal through the particular found within the novel itself rejects this kind of either/or ultimatum: either pure indigenous or effaced international text, offering instead an alternative wherein cultural specificity can be maintained among wider transnational, and even universal, associations.³⁰

Identifying *Famished Road*'s relationship towards magical realism's aesthetic parameters offers another means of exploring the taxonomic question. Recalling Amaryll Chanady's three-part criteria for magical realism listed in chapter one—two antinomious codes (magic and realism); the resolution of logical antinomy; and authorial reticence—*Famished Road* clearly fulfills these aspects, a fact which suggests the fruitfulness of analyzing it within this mode (though this need not be the exclusive grid). The focus on aesthetics is a particular strength of Faris' work on magical realism in *Ordinary Enchantments*, wherein *Famished Road* is one of the key texts she uses to analyze the mode. While she approaches her analysis of magical realism from various angles such as narrative styles, techniques, and cultural issues, a particular benefit her work offers is precisely what Okpala laments, a focus on magical realism's formal characteristics, what she calls "a textual poetics" of magical realism, which allows transnational comparative analyses to be made: "Because magical realism is important as an international style, even though I consider the subject matter of magical realist fictions, my primary concern

here is to study how this mode operates as discourse, irrespective of thematic content” (3-4).

Famished Road is one of the texts she uses as an exemplar of the fifth primary characteristic she lists for magical realism, a reorientation of “received ideas about time, space, and identity” (7).

Despite the narrative’s aesthetic resemblance to the mode as well as the way the novel itself embeds a logic which is compatible with one’s situating it within magical realism, *Famished Road*’s author works to distance the novel from magical realism, and while doing so implicitly concurs with many of the critics just examined. Okri bases this disassociation on the argument that he is writing from within a worldview in which the supernatural is part of reality:

If you accept the basic premise that this kid is an *abiku*, a spirit child, it’s not unnatural that he would see spirits. If all the characters were to see spirits, that would be pushing it a bit, as far as Western thinking is concerned. [...] That is different. I’m looking at the world in *The Famished Road* from inside the African world view, but without it being codified as such. [...] I’m treating it naturally. It’s a kind of realism, but a realism with many more dimensions.

Okri distinguishes his African novel from “Latin American writers [who]—let’s be quite honest—are largely European Latin American writers.” While “their writing has, as it were, come through the journey of symbolism, surrealism, and then come right around to the reality of that particular place,” Okri implies here that his novel has a more direct relationship to indigenous beliefs and, furthermore, is not linked to European aesthetics, as untenable as these suggestions appear (“Ben,” *Contemporary* 337-38).

Ironically, about forty years prior to Okri’s interview, Latin American magical realist Carpentier made strikingly similar arguments when trying to position his own Latin American aesthetics, *lo real maravilloso*, away from European Surrealists.³¹ In his prologue to *The Kingdom of This World* (1949), Carpentier juxtaposes the “manufactured [...] tricks” of the Surrealists with the marvels inherent to Latin American history, topography, and worldviews. In demarcating their aesthetics as authentic reflections of the people comprising their natal nations

(whether in the past or present), both Okri and Carpentier marshal the argument of true faith. Whereas Okri insists upon the realism of his novel because of its reflecting an actual African worldview, the supernatural aspects of Carpentier's marvelous realist tales derive from the occult beliefs of Afro-Caribbean peoples. Hence, "*el negro*" sends Cuban character Marcial and his house retrogressing in time in "Journey to the Seed" and the Haitian slaves believe Macandal's shapeshifting has saved him in *Kingdom*, a dramatization of Carpentier's experience in Haiti, he suggests: "[...] I found myself in daily contact with something that could be defined as the marvelous real. I was in a land where thousands of men, anxious for freedom, believed in Macandal's lycanthropic powers to the extent that their collective faith produced a miracle on the day of his execution." In contrast to the Surrealists' forced effects, it is this aspect of faith that underlies access to America's marvelous reality, Carpentier contends: "[...] the phenomenon of the marvelous presupposes faith" ("Marvelous" 86-87).³²

Deandrea identifies additional aspects of compatibility among the magical realism of Okri and Carpentier, which he highlights when tracing a transatlantic West African-Caribbean magical realist link. Exploring the origins of West African magical realism which begins in the mid 1980s with Okri, Syl Cheney-Coker, and Kojouhar Lang, Deandrea first begins in a locus across the Atlantic from West Africa's shores, the Caribbean.³³ He identifies Carpentier's novel *Kingdom* and its prologue as "the theoretical-cum-fictional statement of considerable import to West African literature," then follows this connection through Alexis's essay "Of the Marvelous Realism of the Haitians," and, finally, to Nigerian Kole Omotoso's critical text *The Form of the African Novel* (1979).

Deandrea traces several threads in this filiation. The first is the common use of the term *lo real maravilloso*, or what Harriet de Onís has translated "the marvelous in the real" (30) and

John La Rose, “the marvels of reality,” Deandrea records (34-35).³⁴ Carpentier’s nomenclature is adopted by both Alexis and Omotoso, and, importantly, all of these figures enact the meaning of the term, an emphasis on the real. In Carpentier’s *Kingdom*, Deandrea explains, “the marvelous has profound relevance to everyday reality and social matters”; Alexis uses “the marvelous as a means of interpreting reality”; and Omotoso “invokes the rejection of any form of escapism” (31-32). Finally, Deandrea underlines the cultural relationship between the practitioners of marvelous realism, namely the African link. While “it is evident that there is a Latin American influence on West African magical realism [...] the culture of the Americas, in turn, was historically affected by philosophies imported through the slave trade” (35). This generates what Deandrea calls “a transatlantic feedback cycle” in West African magical realism (35). More than a simple racial connection, the indigenous worldviews transmitted through Latin American marvelous realism derived, in significant part, from the Africans brought there, a point that destabilizes, to a degree, any neat distinction between the Caribbean and West Africa. The characteristics Deandrea lists suggest the inclusion of Okri and his novel in this genealogy. Though Okri does not employ *lo real maravilloso* to refer to his novel—indeed, he rejects any relationship with Latin American magical realists, as has been seen—*Famished Road* enacts the meaning of the term, it depicts “the marvelous in the real,” and fits within the same transatlantic geo-cultural terrain.

Associating *Famished Road* with this term is critically beneficial. While this study views *lo real maravilloso* as a significant component within magical realism, the former encompasses specific characteristics, as Deandrea has shown, characteristics which are not necessary for the minimalist aesthetic requirements of the more broad magical realism. Therefore, situating *Famished Road* in relation to *lo real maravilloso* highlights those aspects of the narrative which

lo real maravilloso calls to the foreground: Afro-Caribbean culture and beliefs as well as an emphasis on reality, along with a third connection that will be added presently, and one which will be apparent now that we are looking retrospectively from *Famished Road* onto these earlier texts. Humanism, broadly understood as an elevation of human being and the human domain, can be identified as an additional, significant characteristic in this transatlantic Afro-Caribbean loop.³⁵ The aspects of the real venerated in *Famished Road*, as has been seen, involve not only the animist worldview, as Okri suggests, but also the narrative's vernacular humanism, its ennobling of human being, the human domain, natal ties, and the nation. As will be seen now, these aspects are also variously shared by Carpentier's and Alexis's texts. All three employ the marvelous not only to stress aspects of reality, but to elevate it, and, furthermore, to create a values hierarchy wherein human being is located at the center of this marvelous reality.

While Carpentier theorizes *lo real maravilloso* in his prologue, I want to focus here on his dramatization of it in *Kingdom*, the novel with which his prologue was published, as the representation of a marvelous reality within narrative provides a point of common ground among Carpentier and Okri. In both *Kingdom* and *Famished Road*, the code of realism is integral to their complex narrative structures, as is seen in their historical referents. Whereas in *Famished Road* Okri (re)imagines the transition within Nigeria from colonial rule to independence, foreshadowing the impending civil war, *Kingdom* is a novel with strong historical links to the Haitian slave-led revolt against the French in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries (Warnes 64-65). Nevertheless, neither are simply realist tales, but "bidimensional" magical realist narratives incorporating two antinomious dimensions, or "levels of reality," the supernatural and the natural (Chanady's first criterion) (*Magical* 9-10). Besides this common

structure, though, both narratives organize the codes in a similar thematic way: the supernatural reinforces the significance of the natural.

In *Kingdom*, the Haitian slaves believe Macandal, a Mandingue slave, is able to metamorphose into different creatures:

[The slaves] all knew that the green lizard, the night moth, the strange dog, the incredible gannet, were nothing but disguises. As he had the power to take the shape of hoofed animal, bird, fish, or insect, Macandal continually visited the plantations of the Plaine to watch over his faithful [...]. (41)

While these transformations are remarkable, though, they merely anticipate his final and greatest change, when “the voice of the great conch shell would bellow through the hills to announce to all that Macandal had completed the cycle of his metamorphoses, and stood poised once more, sinewy and hard, with testicles like rocks, on his own human legs” (43). That the return to his human body represents the “completion” of Macandal’s transmutations places human being at the pinnacle of these marvelous changes. Resonant with *Famished Road*’s King of the Unborn, the heroic figure of Macandal enfolds supreme value in the kingdom of this world, not a transcendent realm outside, be that animal or spiritual.

This function of the supernatural is further emphasized later with the metamorphosis of another former slave, Ti Noël. When Ti Noël transforms into different animals, the narrative censures him: he fails to be accepted into a community of geese as “a punishment for his cowardice.” Why this contrasting treatment of the same magical phenomenon among Ti Noël and Macandal? While Ti Noël is trying to depart from this world to find a better one, “Macandal had disguised himself as an animal for years to serve men, not to abjure the world of men.” The supernatural is to advocate, here “serve,” the natural, not to provide a means of escaping from it. This values hierarchy, wherein human being takes pride of place, is made explicit at the end of the novel:

In the Kingdom of Heaven there is no grandeur to be won, inasmuch as there all is an established hierarchy, the unknown is revealed, existence is infinite, there is no possibility of sacrifice, all is rest and joy. For this reason, bowed down by suffering and duties, beautiful in the midst of his misery, capable of loving in the face of afflictions and trials, man finds his greatness, his fullest measure, only in the Kingdom of This World. (185)

Here, the parallels among Carpentier's and Okri's humanism are pronounced. This citation from *Kingdom* is strongly evocative of the moments in *Famished Road* when the narrative enacts a reversal of the Heaven/earth binary, particularly the three-headed spirit's explanation to Azaro of the dead who yearn to experience the "imperfect" and "to strive."³⁶

Warnes' analysis of the function of magic in this final scene with Ti Noël offers a richer appreciation of *Kingdom*'s inversion. Arguing that the magical metamorphoses of Ti Noël serve as a didactic device akin to parable, as opposed to the ontological function of positing a different (in this case Afro-Caribbean) worldview, Warnes points to the intertextual link between the title of Carpentier's novel and the Biblical book of Revelations, wherein chapter eleven verse fifteen reads: "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.'" According to Warnes,

Carpentier's novel reinforces the message of the parable as it ironizes the biblical promise of the seventh angel [...]. [...] In Carpentier's account, finally, there is no such closure or escape from history available to human beings. The parable rejects the transcendental and indicates a commitment to the realities of "this world" [...]. (71-72)

Carpentier's privileging of this world is further reflected in his theoretical explanations of how the marvelous functions. In Zamora and Faris's words: "Carpentier's 'marvelous American reality' does not imply a conscious assault on conventionally depicted reality, but, rather, an amplification of perceived reality" (75).³⁷ *Lo real maravilloso* exemplifies the view of magic as

summation, or infusion: the supernatural is not opposed to reality, but imbues and replenishes it.

Carpentier expresses this concept in his prologue:

[...] the marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality, perceived with particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state [*estado límite*]. (86)³⁸

An “extreme state” seems also a fitting description for the revelations of the “holiness” of earth, its marvelousness, which Dad and Azaro experience as they grow towards manhood. In both instances, the transcendent is shown to be enfolded within the human plane.

When Alexis defines “the marvelous realism of the Haitians” in his seminal essay by the same name, he does so with a dual emphasis on both reality and a new humanism.³⁹ These two aspects are central to his theorizations of marvelous realism, as is clear from the sheer number of times he mentions each of those terms and their near synonyms in this essay. Alexis identifies this movement as the “School of New Realism” (252). The real is evoked when he argues that “art for us [Haitians] is essentially linked to practical life; before the collectors arrived in Africa, the craftsman was a decorator of useful objects, ritual or otherwise” (263). Alexis brings to the fore the role of Africa in the transatlantic loop of marvelous realism. He explains that Haiti is a place whose culture and people are composed of three predominant influences, the Taino Chemes Indians, Africans, and the French, though he contends that “the contribution which has played the largest part in constituting Haitian culture is the African contribution” (256-57).

The importance of reality in Alexis’ theorization is reflected in his conception of how the marvelous interacts with the real. Alexis frames the marvelous as not a rejection of reality, but a movement towards a fuller representation of it, and so recalls the notion described in the

preceding chapter that magical realism can function as a supplement to reality. He voices this by contrasting two types of realism, a logical form he derides and Haitian realism:

This [Haitian] art demonstrates the falseness of the theories of those who would reject the marvelous on the pretext of realist purpose, claiming that the marvelous is solely the expression of primitive societies. The truth is that these drily [sic] and pretendedly [sic] realistic works miss their mark and do not touch certain peoples. Down with this analytical and reasoning realism which does not touch the masses! Up with a living realism, linked to the magic of the Universe, a realism which stirs not only the mind, but also the heart and the whole network of the nerves. (267)

Alexis thus makes the distinction similar to that made by Okri and Carpentier among an attenuated reality and their marvelous (complete) variant. What is more, Alexis describes this movement in a way that attributes value and weight to aspects of human experience. He describes this as a “living realism” and includes attention to sensual, even bodily aspects, the heart and the nerves. These significant aspects of human being, he insists, are excluded within a merely rational orientation towards the real.

Alexis describes the emerging movement of Haitian marvelous realism in a profusion of characteristics, evocative of both *Famished Road*'s narrative style as well as Carpentier's description of the baroque spirit in the marvelous real as “proliferating nuclei” (“Baroque” 93):

The result is unique; violence, interlacing rhythms, ingenuousness, exuberance, sharpness of tone, aggressiveness of line, luxuriance of spirals, the pathos of the vibrato, [...] zoomorphic elements asymmetrically assembled, confronted, to terminate in a flower, a human sentiment, a genuine thrill, concrete, harsh, and even shameless images, poignant reversions, monotone percussions, and from the midst of all that, surges Man, laboring for his destiny and his happiness.

Key in this linguistic sequence is the figure of Man, standing in the center of an extravagant Haitian marvelous realism, a position symbolizing the central role human being plays in Alexis' theorizations. So essential, in fact, is Man to Alexis' description, that he asserts it as the “sole criterion for judging” this new art: “[...] does it throw light upon man and his destiny, his day-to-day problems, his optimistic combats and his enfranchisements?” (268). Here Alexis

interconnects human subjectivity with human agency. In other words, a crucial aspect of the ideal of human being is its relationship with the value of acting in the here and now, a feature which is also vital in West African humanism, as has been seen.

Finally, Alexis' formulation of the marvelous real brings to the fore the centrality of the nation, a feature reminiscent of Carpentier's pronounced regionalism, Latin America's unique marvels. More specifically, though, Alexis triangulates the marvelous real, humanism, and the national tie in a way that closely correlates with *Famished Road*. "To sum up, the objects of Marvelous Realism," Alexis lists four attributes, the first being "to sing the beauties of the Haitian motherland, its greatness as well as its wretchedness, with the sense of the magnificent prospects which are opened up by the struggles of its people and their solidarity with all men, and in this way to attain the human, the universal and the profound truth of life" (272). Like the West African humanists, a group which includes Okri, in Alexis' humanist formulation one must act in solidarity with one's natal attachment, particularly the nation, "to attain the human." Alexis, too, then, crafts a local/global dialectic. Serving as a precursor to *Famished Road*, his marvelous realism enshrines a vernacular humanism.

Magical Realism

The magic of magical realist narratives is salient. This is true of its presence in the text, its undeniable and unexplained manifestation, what David Young and Keith Hollaman call the "irreducible element" (4). Narrative magic is also conspicuous in magical realism because of its difference from literary realism, a contrast which is ever sustained in this mode because of the hybrid relationship among the two codes, as the nomenclature itself indicates. Finally, we saw in the previous chapter the way crucial figures, such as Carpentier (in "Journey") and García

Márquez (in “Light”), have employed narrative magic in ways that do make it the centerpiece of the narrative, acting to undermine the real.

These are at least a few reasons that explain why the realist aspect of magical realism can tend to be unfairly neglected compared to its co-dimensional, if more attractive, companion, magic. Yet, it is the hybrid mode’s realist attributes—the way it speaks to a host of social, historical, and political issues in extratextual reality—that has helped to make it such an attractive aesthetic for historically marginalized and oppressed people groups. Rushdie’s comments on British racism through the demonized figure of Saladin Chamcha; Toni Morrison’s agonizing depiction of US slavery with *Sethe* and *Beloved*; and Angela Carter’s feminist critiques issued through the winged *Fevvers*, all illustrate this. These examples of the significance of the real—enabled through magic—exude a touch of irony, though, because the same critical view of magical realism that seeks to retain the socio-political pointedness of magical realism, the particularist hermeneutic that views the mode as coterminous with a subversive politic, also advocates an aesthetic interpretation that works against and minimizes the real: magic is the heroic agent subverting hegemonic realism.

Famished Road is significant within the magical realist corpus for the way it defies generalizations about how the components of the mode should/do function. Instead of employing indigenous (animist) beliefs to subvert Western hegemonic frameworks, the narrative employs its magic to construct a strategy of belonging which foregrounds its humanist ideals. However, far from simply reversing the aforementioned binary (indigenous magic versus Western rubrics), the vernacular humanist strategy of belonging links the narrative with an anti- and postcolonial humanist tradition, and, more specifically, a transatlantic West African-Caribbean aesthetic embodiment of humanist ideals, *lo real maravilloso*, the marvels of reality.

Chapter Three

The Family Nexus in Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*

“What, then, does it mean to be Cuban today? Where do we call home? What are the trade-offs and betrayals we make with our choices?” –Cristina García

“We are acting parts in a play that we have never read and never seen, whose plot we don't know, whose existence we can glimpse, but whose beginning and end are beyond our present imagination and conception.” –R. D. Laing on the family drama¹

Cuban history and culture is refracted through Cristina García's first three novels, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), *The Agüero Sisters* (1997), and *Monkey Hunting* (2003). The Cuban-American author acknowledges this thematic interrelatedness: “Really, it was only when I was halfway through *Monkey Hunting* that I realized that what I was trying to do, literarily, was to amplify an appreciation for the complex history that is Cuba” (“Interview” 178). The reader of these novels will discover that García succeeds in her subconscious project of demonstrating the island's complexity, as one finds interwoven in this near-trilogy Cuba's syncretic culture, composed as it is of Spanish, African, and Chinese threads; its Revolution; its involvement in the Cold War; and its diaspora, to name a few key aspects.

Dreaming, the focus of this chapter, is set for the most part in the aftermath of the Revolution and follows three generations of the del Pino family, some of whom stay on the island and some of whom leave, traveling to the US across the Florida Straits, what María de los Angeles Torres refers to as “the longest ninety miles of ocean in the world” (9). The narrative reveals at the beginning of *Dreaming* that Lourdes and her family, her husband Rufino and daughter Pilar, fled the country in 1961 with the first waves of exiles, leaving behind Celia (Lourdes' mother), Jorge (her father), and Felicia (her sister). Their departure recalls the half a million Cubans who historically emigrated to the US, Latin America, and Europe by 1970, within the first decade of Castro's acquisition of power (Pérez 349). Ylce Irizarry is referring to Lourdes' family when she

describes: “[*Dreaming*’s] treatment of Cuban exiles’ acculturation to the United States is compelling and the focus of much of the scholarship on the book” (175).

This thematic element of political exile in the novel suggests the appropriateness of situating it within the guiding concern of this study, strategies, or means, of belonging. Indeed, throughout the narrative Pilar, Lourdes’ daughter, wrestles with the two halves of her hyphenated identity and its implications for her place in the world. However, any expectations about what trajectory such an exercise might follow is complicated once one realizes that exile and a sense of place, along with related issues such as belonging and identity, are not solely the predicament of Lourdes’ family, but are also deeply experienced by figures who never leave the island, Celia and Felicia for example.

Dreaming appropriates political concepts, such as exile, to dramatize politics within the family. This is merely one of numerous avenues through which the narrative depicts the profound influence, both positive and negative, characters have on each other, particularly those within relationships which R.D. Laing, the Glaswegian psychiatrist, and Aaron Esterton refer to as the family nexus, that web of relationships which includes the “kinship group” as well as other intimate, influential ties such as those forged among lovers and friends (*Sanity* 21). The evocation of psychiatry draws a third domain into this narrative analysis, in addition to the political and the domestic. Sadly, mental illness pervades this novel, and after being read through Laing will be shown to be a condition deeply interconnected with destructive interaction among the family nexus. Inversely to these grim scenarios, however, several characters—Pilar and Abuela Celia as well as Lourdes and Jorge—have abiding and enriching relationships which contribute crucial aspects to their senses of self-amidst-world.

The del Pino family tree is complex, not because of issues of filiation as much as interaction. It is wrought with knotted and twisted branches of relational interconnection. Nevertheless, these and other small-level, face-to-face attachments are tremendously and inescapably formative: the relationships they comprise, or lack thereof, shape characters' lives, their affinities and aversions, even their mental wellness or illness. We might revisit now, then, the question of how *Dreaming* depicts the strategies through which its characters derive senses of belonging. In *Dreaming*, it is the family nexus that forges characters' conceptions of locatedness, selfhood, and meaning, and this for better or for worse. Besides being seen from various thematic angles within the narrative, this strategy is reflected in *Dreaming*'s aesthetics, its employment of magical realism, as narrative magic frequently acts as both amplification and conduit of strong relational bonds.

Political Families

Dreaming's preoccupation with the family nexus does not in any way suggest the absence of historico-political issues.² In *Dreaming* (as in the other novels of her trilogy) García interfaces the historico-political and domestic in a way that comprises a kind of background/foreground duality. The political, what García has referred to as the "larger historical sweep," serves as the background in a narrative frame which foregrounds individual characters and families ("Interview" 185-86). Critics have noticed this literary camerawork and have theorized the interplay among the political background and domestic foreground in various ways.

Andrea O'Reilly Herrera alternately describes a parallelism and intersection functioning between the domestic sphere, traditionally thought of as the woman's domain, and the political sphere, the domain of paternalistic history:

In her first novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), Cuban-American author Cristina García distinguishes herself by linking women's experiences in the domestic sphere to broader racial, ethnic, and political issues. She accomplishes this through a microcosm/macrocosm paradigm which draws a direct parallel between women's activities and experiences in the

home and larger Historical events, such as the 1959 Cuban Revolution. (71)

This view of the interaction between public and private leads Herrera to discuss *Dreaming* in allegorical terms.³ She thus refers to “the trope of the divided family” which “also functions as a metaphor for the state of Cuba after the Revolution” (77). The loss of Celia’s children is an example of “the theme of maternal loss” in the novel which “is metaphorically linked to the larger losses that Cuba, as mother country, sustained both prior to, and in the wake of, the Revolution” (73). García gains much from this approach, argues Herrera. By “filter[ing] Cuban history through [...] three generations of women” (71-72), she paradoxically both attributes public significance to her female protagonists by intersecting their lives with significant aspects of Cuban history, while simultaneously “quarrelling” with that very version of history for the way it has traditionally excluded women, their views and concerns, rendering them ahistorical. In this way García supplants “H/history” with “herstory”: “[...] García has devised a storytelling method that not only speaks of the female self by standing in defiance of traditional narratives of female Caribbean experience but she elevates women's experience in general, and her experience in particular, and thereby renders both Historically and culturally significant” (79).

David Mitchell suggests a level of parallelism, but he does so in order to argue that the similarities among the two domains work to support what he argues is a “parasitic relation” between them:

While I am not interested in reading García's novel as a straightforward nationalist allegory in the Jamesonian sense, my thinking involves an attempt to understand her fictional family as a parallel structure to Bhabha's own sense of the imagined unity of nation. Specifically, I want to suggest that [...] they [nation and family] exist in parasitic relation to one another by virtue of a shared desire for a unity that inevitably proves to be illusory and contradictory. In other words, family and nation paradoxically coexist because neither grouping succeeds in sustaining the singularity to which each necessarily aspires. (52)

According to Mitchell, conflicted family members take up divergent political affiliations creating a situation wherein domestic conflicts masquerade as vehement political differences. The nation, in turn, depends upon just this type of “variegated and multiple utility of ideological doctrines,” and this in spite of its being represented within “the illusion of singularity” (56, 58).

Consequentially, these two institutions perpetuate and sustain each other.

I begin this chapter by situating *Dreaming* within a third configuration: the distinction between the domestic and political domains is collapsed.⁴ The private realm becomes public, while the public manifests in the private. The two are fluid, continually shifting like Celia’s maritime horizon. This narrative tool effects a destabilization of the purported fixed distinction between them, a separation which often enables a privileging of the public sphere of politics and history over and above the private, domestic sphere. Ultimately, it works together with other narrative tools which will be explored in this chapter to buttress *Dreaming*’s emphasis on the impact on individual characters of interpersonal interaction, especially that which occurs within the family.

To illustrate in *Dreaming* the way the private becomes public, García draws from historically based instances within Cuba’s revolutionary social, political, and economic reconstructions which transpired after 1959. One example of this occurs when Celia presides as civilian judge in the People’s Court. “Since the Family Code passed earlier this year,” Celia explains, “more and more people are turning to the courts with their problems. Women who claim their husbands are not doing their share of their housework or who want to put a stop to an extramarital affair bring the matter before a judge” (112). The Family Code (*Código de Familia*) to which Celia is referring is a law that was passed in Cuba in 1975 “with the goal of eliminating discrimination against women and creating economic equality within marriage,” and for these reasons was seen

as incredibly progressive. The Code is comprised of 166 articles that “address a broad range of family matters including marriage, divorce, parental issues, nutrition, adoption, and guardianship” (*Encyclopedia* 282). As mentioned, the Code is legally binding, which means, as Cuban-resident Margaret Randall points out,

the judicial repercussions of the Code, needless to say, depend on women themselves actually taking their husbands to court for violations. [...] A woman can go to the president of her CDR, or to the leadership of her own or her husband’s trade union, and she has a legal, and not simply a subjective, basis on which to request help in an unequal home situation. (403)

According to Randall, “the clauses in this Code receiving the most attention and discussion are those stipulating both parents’ equal responsibilities for child care and housework” (402), though in fictional Celia’s court case the issue involves marital infidelity. One woman has accused another of seducing the first’s husband, a charge the accused denies. Nevertheless, in both imaginative and historical instances, intimate matters within the domestic domain become a legal and public affair. *Dreaming* presses this point when Celia, disapprovingly, describes the way the crowds have gathered to watch the case unfold as if it were “a live soap opera,” while a vendor sells peanuts outside the theater/court to the incoming onlookers (116).

In addition to social and legal changes, Cuba’s economy is radically altered from a capitalist system comprised of private businesses to a socialist one presided over by the state. Louis A.

Pérez, Jr. describes the final nationalization of the private economic sector:

In 1968, the government launched the “revolutionary offensive” in which the remaining 57,000 private enterprises—principally small retail shops, handicrafts, service and repair centers, bars, and cafés—were nationalized. In one stroke, Cuba was transformed into one of the most socialized societies in the world. (341)

Further describing Cuba’s process of socialization in the 60s, Pérez gives other examples of the shift wherein many previously considered private responsibilities came under the care of the government: “Efforts were also made to expand the distribution of free goods and services. No

fees were charged for health services, utilities, sports events, local bus transportation, and local telephone service. [...] In many units, rent was not collected at all” (341). As history has shown, the zealous economic reversals of the 1960s generated shortages due to, according to Pérez, “over-centralization and ineffective incentives” (348). Celia refers to these early years of the Revolution when she recalls to Pilar “the hardships” and “the rationing that Celia knew were necessary to redistribute the country’s wealth” (118).

In reverse of the private sphere being drawn into the public, *Dreaming* depicts the public, political sphere manifesting in the domestic domain through its politicization of the family. To characterize the del Pinos as a political family is true on multiple levels, through I mean to isolate a particular sense. They are political not simply because they take up different positions on the Cuban Revolution and thereby “play out nationalist dramas,” as Mitchell describes, though that is there (53). Nor is the family merely allegorically political, its conflicts paralleling the nation-state of Cuba. Its political nature is literal. It forms a zone wherein occur issues typically located exclusively in the public domain—power struggles, factions, and exile—and this long before the Revolution appeared on the temporal horizon in the case of Jorge and Celia, a point which suggests that the family is political in nature regardless of what events transpire within and between nations. As a result, *Dreaming* illustrates the way that, in Su-lin Yu’s words, “families are often the most private sites of warfare, expressions of dominance, and fields of hierarchical values” (346). García expresses this aspect of *Dreaming* this way:

[...] There is a [sociopolitical] context for these women. I wanted to examine very closely the personal cost of what happened in Cuba after 1959. And I wanted to very specifically examine how women have responded and adapted to what happened to their families after 1959. I also was very interested in examining the emotional and political alliances that form within families. (“...And There” 106)

Dreaming illustrates through its politicization of the family that the realm of politics is not restricted to that world “out there,” the public region of governments and a few powerful (male) figures, but politics also function within the home.

The political nature of the del Pino family is signaled explicitly when Ivanito recounts his sister’s injunction: “Luz says that families are essentially political and that he’ll have to choose sides” (86). Unfortunately, Luz’s dictum proves all too true. The del Pino family’s interaction is characterized by myriad schisms. Luz and her twin, Milagro, side against their younger brother: “Ivanito senses [...] that something has come between them. [...] He is convinced, although he couldn’t say why, that they’re united against him, against his happiness with Mamá” (86). In addition, Lourdes and her father, Jorge, form a coalition against Celia and Lourdes’ sister, Felicia. Repeating this pattern, Lourdes’ daughter, Pilar, and her father, Rufino, forge an alliance from which Lourdes is excluded.

Along with divisive factions, issues of power plague the family. Frequently, these reflect gender inequality. In repeated examples, men have the agency with which to travel, while women are abandoned at home. This is demonstrated with Celia’s lover, Gustavo, with her later husband, Jorge, and with Felicia’s husband, Hugo. The affairs Hugo has while traveling abroad have extreme consequences on the family he leaves behind. Felicia’s health is threatened: “Her sex [...] was infected with syphilis and the diseases Hugo brought back from Morocco and other women.” The narrative intimates this as one possible explanation for her subsequent mental illness and death. Evoking something similar to the barbarity and brutality of war, the domestic abuse involved in their marriage offers a tragic example of how power is too often injuriously employed within the home. On their wedding night: “Hugo pressed his fist under Felicia’s chin until he choked off her breath, until she could see the walls of the living room behind her. ‘If you

come near me, I'll kill you. Do you understand?" In order to end this domestic dictatorship, Felicia drops a burning rag on her husband's face. He never returns to their home again (81-82). Hugo and Felicia's relationship is marred by betrayal, oppression, and violence.

Finally, in a complex interplay of the two layers comprising the novel, the familial and the historico-political, the theme of exile permeates the del Pino's family politics. In addition to the traditional aspects of exile dramatized in the narrative which have already been mentioned (that involving Lourdes' family), Celia, who has never left Cuba, trice experiences various types of exile. After being abandoned by her Spanish lover, Gustavo, Celia does not get out of bed for eight consecutive months, a time period the text refers to as "her housebound exile" (37). This syntax likens the loss of love to the loss of self involved in translocational political exile, a comparison which renders several effects, the exploration of which further illuminates what the technique of politicizing the family offers the narrative.⁵ First, employing the term *exile* to describe Gustavo's desertion squarely situates this event within the realm of family politics, thus evoking all the issues of power, betrayal, and gender already described.

Second, this term foregrounds Celia's alienation, and it accomplishes this through a double gesture of both borrowing and then relocating concepts from the political domain to express Celia's heartbreak and abandonment. The use of *exile* to frame Celia's experience recalls the word's etymology. In addition to *exile*'s continued usage as expatriation, the term carries an obsolete definition: "slender, shrunken, thin, diminutive"; or "waste or devastation of property; ruin, utter impoverishment." This is the sense of the word at work in the disused phrase "to put in exile [Old French, *mettre a essil*]" which was employed to mean "to ravage (a country)" or "ruin (a person)" (*Oxford*). Exile or banishment was seen to have a "ruinous" or "diminutive" effect on the person forced away from his national homeland and compatriots, and in this sense relates to

more contemporary usages which view exile in a similar way. This correlation of archaic and contemporary treatments of exile depends upon an essentialist link between the geopolitical location of one's birth and one's identity, an association which many intellectuals including Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha, Martha Nussbaum, Timothy Brennan, and Salman Rushdie have called attention to over the past several decades. Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, who himself went into exile in Paris during the Batista regime in the 1950s before becoming recognized as "the poet of the Revolution" (Hennessy 19), affirms this link in his poem "*Responde Tú*" ("Answer Me" [1964]):

Tú, que partiste de Cuba / responde tú, / ¿dónde hallarás verde y verde, / azul y azul, / palma y palma bajo el cielo? / Responde tú. / Tú, que tu lengua olvidaste, / [...] Tú, que dejaste la tierra, / [...] Ah desdichado, responde, / responde tú [...].

You, who left Cuba / answer me, / Where will you find so many greens, / so many blues, / and so many palm trees under the sky? / Answer me. / You, who have forgotten your language, / [...] You who left your land behind, / [...] Oh, poor wretch, answer, / answer me. [Ortiz-Carboneres 1-20])

In *Dreaming Celia*, a devoted *fidelista* or supporter of Fidel Castro, shares the position held by the speaker in Guillén's poem, endorsing the homeland-identity link. She believes that Pilar is suffering because she is away from Cuba: "Pilar, her first grandchild, writes to her from Brooklyn in a Spanish that is no longer hers. [...] Pilar's eyes, Celia fears, are no longer used to the compacted light of the tropics [...]. She imagines her granddaughter pale, gliding through paleness, malnourished and cold without the food of scarlets and greens" (7).

On the other hand, when Pilar becomes a young adult, she freely chooses to stay in New York, and not the country of her birth. In order to make this choice, though, she must ignore Celia's pleas for her to stay: "I have this image of Abuela Celia underwater [...]. She calls to me but I can't hear her" (220). Lourdes, in a very Rushdie-esque moment, celebrates the benefits exile has given her: "Lourdes considers herself lucky. Immigration has redefined her, and she is grateful.

Unlike her husband, she welcomes her adopted language, its possibilities for reinvention” (73). Though, as will be seen later, Lourdes’ celebratory attitude must be weighted against the symptoms she exhibits which suggest her leaving Cuba is more than exultant release, but also traumatic rupture. Nevertheless, exile in its conventional, political sense is a moving concept in García’s narrative, slippery and unable to be pinned down to any singular value judgment.

Celia’s unconventional, attenuating encounter with exile is dramatized in the novel as an experience in which the two traditional meanings of exile (expatriation and ruination) converge. Her forced departure from the (metaphorical) place where she has come to find belonging and meaning, with Gustavo, has ruinous effects on her. *Dreaming* thus applies the political notion of exile in an unorthodox, though analogous, context. In doing so, the narrative shifts the focus from the broken bonds of nation to the broken bonds of love. Furthermore, while calling into question the relationship in political exile between attenuation and geo-political severance (Lourdes and Pilar seem to benefit from choosing to stay away), it clearly links the two in the latter sense.

There is yet a third effect that can be identified in the narrative’s employment of the term *exile* to describe Celia’s desertion, the relativization of space. The narrative suggests Celia has come to inhabit a foreign land, exiled within the country of her birth. This kind of phenomenological treatment of space reverberates in myriad similar moments throughout the novel. Those within the same community, even the same household can seem as if they are on another continent, or even another planet: “Celia’s father had maintained two families, each with nine children. His second family lived less than a mile away but they might as well have been across the world” (92). Pilar also describes her father in these terms: “[...] he’s just in his own orbit” (138). In a related manner, people within characters’ own families can seem completely

foreign, estranged from other members. This occurs between spouses, a relationship that can be one of the closest among humans: “These days, Lourdes recognizes her husband’s face [...] but he is a stranger to her. She looks at him the way she might look at a photograph of her hands, unfamiliar upon closer inspection” (131). Celia, in turn, describes Lourdes this way: “That girl is a stranger to me” (163).

Dreaming’s relativization of space works alongside its politicization of the family not only in the case of Celia’s exile, but in the way that both emphasize characters’ experience. Interaction among the family can feel like warfare, and abandonment by a lover can be experienced as the loss of place in the world. This effects more than an analogical function, but actually attributes weight to the events that transpire in the domestic realm. Love and betrayal enacted within the context of intimate relationships impact individuals at least as profoundly as events transpiring in the public sphere. Conversely, to treat space as relative de-emphasizes the role of material, political location in belonging, and so paves the way for the narrative’s emphasis on the family nexus as the primary means of belonging in juxtaposition to conventional ruminations on belonging in exile texts wherein geo-political locus takes pride of place. For Pilar, space has become disorienting, as she struggles to know whether she should live in Cuba or the US, and she will come to understand her place in the world through her interaction with her Abuela Celia, though this in a way that is perhaps unexpected as she does not stay with Celia in Cuba.

I would like to suggest that Celia’s “housebound exile” is the first in a string of three which she experiences. Celia’s second exile occurs just after Jorge and Celia are married, when Jorge abandons Celia in the home of his ruthless mother, Betra, and sister, Ofelia. Again here, Celia’s exile brings into play both senses of exile. Analogous to the political meaning, she undergoes “enforced residence in some foreign land,” and, illustrating the obsolete meaning of the word,

her time here has ruinous effects on her (*Oxford*). Celia is the hated other in her in-laws' home. They "scorned her, [...] they ate together in the evenings without inviting her. [...] They left scraps for her to eat, worse than what they fed the dogs in the street" (40). The del Pino women go beyond merely ignoring her: they treat her maliciously. Celia's mother and sister are so cruel to her, in fact, that Celia has a mental breakdown as a result. At the end of the novel, the reader learns through Jorge's confession to Lourdes that this result was his intent:

"After we were married, I left her with my mother and my sister. I knew what it would do to her. A part of me wanted to punish her. For the Spaniard. I tried to kill her, Lourdes. I wanted to kill her. I left her on a long trip after you were born. I wanted to break her, may God forgive me. When I returned, it was done." (195)

Celia's second exile plunges her into her third, one which involves compounding examples of the sense of exile as forced inhabitation in a "foreign land." After her breakdown, Jorge admits Celia into a mental institution, an unfamiliar physical habitus. Madness itself suggests an alien psychological terrain. Finally, Jorge reveals that by taking her here, he was trying to erase Celia's memory: "I left her in the asylum. I told the doctors to make her forget. They used electricity. They fed her pills" (195). The loss of memory flags typical conversations of exile, though here as in other instances the correlation is made to stress a similar, though unconventional, experience of it. Celia's psychiatric treatment effects an additional estrangement. Through the mechanisms of shock therapy and medication, Celia's mental landscape is reoriented into a foreign place, one which, Jorge hopes, is denuded of the memories of and accompanying feelings for the Spaniard who formerly inhabited her consciousness.

As with Celia's first exile after Gustavo's abandonment, her second and third experiences are also characterized by power struggles. All three involve the love triangle of Celia, Jorge, and Gustavo. Jorge's jealousy drives him to compete against (Celia's memory of) Gustavo so that he alone can occupy her thoughts and affections. In this competition, Jorge is willing to inflict

profound, life-long damage on Celia in the hope of winning her completely.⁶ In the end, though, Jorge's methods of control cause him to forfeit the very thing he struggled to acquire, for Celia's attitude towards him becomes one of "kind indifference" and resignation (196). Furthermore, she eventually exchanges Jorge for the Revolution, as is represented by the picture of El Líder (Castro) which covers up Jorge's by her nightstand (219). This love triangle suggests all the resonances of national allegory in which Herrera is interested: Celia (Cuba) is pursued by Gustavo (Spain), a figure who is later supplanted by Jorge (whose politics and employment make him representative of US capitalism). Both leave Celia (Cuba) in ruins, contributing to her giving herself over to the Cuban Revolution. While this parallelism may generate fruitful insight, though, equally fruitful is an analysis of the way(s) that García does not treat domestic and political spheres as mutually exclusive—private mirroring public in an allegorical fashion—nor as merely the intersection of private with public—the way, for example, that a housewife participates in the Revolution (though both these models of interaction are at work). But, the politicization of the family, the way they are depicted as "essentially political" in Luz's words, depicts behavior and interaction typically identified within the political domain as manifesting within the domestic. In this, *Dreaming* appropriates the weight often attributed to the former and relocates it within the latter, thereby magnifying the degree of import affiliated with the domestic sphere and the thick attachments comprising it. Celia's experiences pose the question which is more impacting on an individual, politically or socially induced exile?

Dreaming's employment of exile to demonstrate the significance of attachments within the domestic sphere contrasts sharply with the treatment of exile in Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence*, which is examined at length in chapter four. There, exile reflects the narrative's denigration of particular attachments, as it is the means recommend for escaping them. Exile

represents a detached strategy of being in the world into which characters enter after they have recognized the flawed particularism of their family and neighbors. Insofar as thick attachments in *Dreaming* are important because of the power they wield over one another, too often to harmful ends, the two narratives might be seen to converge at this point. However, *Dreaming* interrogates the notion that one can sever oneself from these small-level attachments. Instead, as will be seen next, García's narrative depicts the influence of the family nexus as inescapable, and, furthermore, to the extent that characters are disconnected from or misaligned with these relationships, they suffer.

Inner Worlds

If the politicization of the family emphasizes the effect domestic relationships have on individual characters, one area where this impact is most visible in *Dreaming* is in the role the family nexus plays in characters' inner world and their attachments to the wider world. Characters' relationships with their family, lovers, and close friends mold their inner worlds, their existential senses of place, selfhood, and meaning, as will be explored now. Additionally, they influence characters' connections to the wider world, to ideals, movements, religions, and nation-states, as will be seen later. Both (inner worlds and attachments to the wider world) are critical factors in characters' formation of self-amidst-others.

To begin exploring the impact of the family on characters' inner worlds, it will prove worthwhile to invoke a figure positioned across the Atlantic from the narrative's Cuban-American setting, the Scotsman Laing, who in the 1960s became renowned for his atypical psychiatric theorizations regarding the interrelatedness of mental illness and the politics of the family, a phrase that serves as the title to one of his early books.⁷ While Laing may initially seem an unlikely figure through whom to analyze aspects of *Dreaming*, García's work has shown an

eagerness for such unexpected intersections. One need only consider her multi-hyphenated characters, *Dreaming*'s Cuban-American Pilar or *Monkey Hunting*'s trice hyphenated Cuban-Chinese-American Domingo Chen. More importantly, *Dreaming* invites a psychoanalytic treatment in its profusion of psychological issues: eating disorders, suicide, incest, madness, abandonment, loss, domestic abuse, and dysfunctional families. Though the title of García's novel may suggest a Freudian compatibility (*Dreaming*), its content points to Laing in its similar preoccupation with the relationship between the family and an individual's psychological well-being.

Salman Raschid writes: "Laing's fundamental contribution was the central, and all-important, one of demonstrating that the seemingly bizarre and 'abnormal' manifestations of psychosis were intelligible when seen in a micro-social context [...]. [...] psychotic symptoms can be made sense of within the complex constellation of family dynamics" (25-26). This is in contrast to what Laing vociferously complained was the inhumane and misguided atomizing of patients by his colleagues in the psychiatric field, as he describes here:

[...] there has been growing dissatisfaction [over the past two decades] with any theory or study of the individual which artificially isolates him from the context of his life, interpersonal and social. [...] one would be foolish to try to disrupt man from his relation to other creatures and from the matter that is his matrix. (*Self* 69-70)⁸

In Laing and Esterton's introduction to *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (1964), they return to this issue: "If one wishes to know how a football team concert or disconcert their actions in play, one does not think only to or even primarily of approaching this problem by talking to the members individually. One watches the way they play together" (21).

Consequently, Laing and Esterton underline that their approach focuses upon what they refer to as the family nexus:

Our interest is in the persons always in relation either with us, or with each other, and always in the light of their group context, which in this work is primarily the family [...]. [...] we are interested in what might be called the family *nexus*, that multiplicity of persons drawn from the kinship group, and from others who, though not linked by kinship ties, are regarded as members of the family. The relationships of persons in a nexus are characterized by enduring and intensive face-to-face reciprocal influence on each other's experience and behavior. (21)

Dreaming's narrative rationale shares a deep affinity with this psychiatric methodology. Its characters only become comprehensible when viewed within the del Pino family nexus. As Laing and Esterton describe, individuals within the familial web have a "reciprocal influence" on one another's "experience and behavior." Performing a Laingian reading on Felicia and, later, Lourdes, interpreting them in light of their being with others, makes sense of the complex points comprising their characters.⁹

In *The Self and Others: Further Studies in Sanity and Madness* (1961), Laing expounds upon the family nexus's role in a particular member's mental health:

This book attempts to depict the own person within a social system or "nexus" of other persons; it attempts to understand the way in which the others affect his experience of himself and of them, and how, accordingly, his actions take shape.

The others either can contribute to the person's self-fulfillment, or they can be a potent fact in his losing himself (alienation) even to the point of madness. (ix)

Laing ascribes profound importance to the familial web. The formation of selfhood, or the failure thereof, is inextricably interconnected to it, even to the extent that negative interaction among the family nexus is linked to madness, or what Laing refers to elsewhere as a phenomenon called "schizogenesis," a literal rendering of the metaphor "driving the other crazy" (*Self* 131).¹⁰

Laing's case study of a man named Peter exemplifies these concepts, and proves simultaneously illuminating for analyzing *Dreaming's* character Felicia, as Peter's situation evinces striking resemblances to hers. While García's narrative does not allow a definitive diagnosis of either the type of Felicia's illness or its source, but instead alludes to various

possible origins, Felicia's madness is clearly linked to her family.¹¹ According to Laing, Peter was emotionally neglected by his parents as a boy: "One of the peculiar aspects of his childhood was that his physical presence in the world was entirely or almost entirely ignored." He began to experience deep "*shame and despair* that he did not seem able to make any difference to his parents in any way." Peter internalized this perceived valuelessness and, as an adult, projected his sense of his own inconsequentiality onto others. He developed a paranoia based on a sense of guilt he felt merely "*because* he occupied a place in the world." In sum, Laing explains:

That is, Peter (*p*) had no place in the world in his own eyes, and he did not believe that he occupied a place in *o*'s world either. The situation was schematically as follows: *p*'s view of *o*'s view of him is that *o* does not see him. On the basis of these gaps in the existential fabric of his (*p*'s) identity, he constructs a delusional presence for *o*. This is what he 'complains' about; i.e. that he stinks in other people's nostrils.

The most common axis, as it were, along which the paranoid person makes his complaints is the view of *p* that *p* attributes to *o*, i.e. $p \rightarrow (o \rightarrow p)$. (*Self* 129-30)

In other words, the paranoid person, in this case Peter, has adopted the view of himself which he believes was that of his parents, an interpretation he based on the lack of place given him initially in the home. He then projects this view onto others (besides his parents), believing that they see him the way he has come to perceive himself.

Like Peter, Felicia was ignored by members of her family. Celia describes how as a child "Felicia cries and wants to play with [Jorge, her father, and Lourdes, her sister] but they ignore her" (54). This early rejection is later exacerbated by her father's disowning Felicia over her husband, Hugo. "If you leave with that sonofabitch," he yells at her, "don't ever come back!" (90). To compound her family's rejection of her, Felicia's first husband not only ignores her, but abuses her, a form of treatment that suggests she is more than peripheral, but worthless enough to be harmed. In a moment of "clarity," she objects to this; this is when she burns Hugo, thereby forcing him out of her life (82). Sadly, this only perpetuates the loop of rejection in which Felicia

seems trapped. For running Hugo off and for her increased instability, Felicia's own daughters come to disregard her completely. Luz recounts: "Since the summer of coconuts, Milagro and I have had a pact to ignore Mamá, to stay as far away from her as possible." In fact, they reject her maternal relationship to them outright when they begin referring to her as "not-Mamá" (121).

In a rare moment in her life, Felicia meets who would become her second husband, Ernesto Brito, a person with whom she quickly develops a bond and to whom she senses she matters. After meeting each other, "for three days they rocked in each other's arms, voracious and inseparable, speaking few words, but knowing all they needed to know" (150). In an uncanny connection appropriate for this magical realist text, Felicia discovered: "[...] they'd been born minutes apart, on the same day, of the same year" (150). With Ernesto, Felicia was finally furnished with significance, the import of which Laing describes:

Every human being, whether child or adult, seems to require *significance*, that is, *place in another person's world*. [...] It seems a universal human desire to wish to occupy a place in the world of at least one other person. [...] Most people at some time in their lives seek the experience, whether or not they had been fortunate enough to find it in the first instance, of occupying the *first* place, if not the only significant place, in at least one other person's scheme of things. (*Self* 127-28)

Laing's emphasis on the crucial component of "existential position," or place, in a person's mental health speaks to the profound role played by both belonging and the family nexus, the source from which a sense of place is (or is not) acquired. In this, Laing—as well as García's narrative dramatization of this aspect of his theory—offers an important dimension to, or psychological defense of, this study's focus on strategies of belonging.

Tragically, Felicia's happiness is fleeting. In fact, just before she met Ernesto, a *santero*, or priest in the Afro-Cuban *Santería* religion, had predicted that her desire for a husband would be unfulfilled: "'What you wish for, daughter, you cannot keep'" (148). As foretold, Ernesto dies in a freak accident the day after their wedding. This loss is deeply destructive to Felicia's

psychological wellbeing. Already delusional, she begins to exhibit the pattern of paranoia described in Peter. She lays the blame for Ernesto's death on the funeral goers : "'You killed him because he was honest!'" She blames El Líder (Castro) himself: "Yes, he must have ordered her husband's murder personally." This idea metastasizes in her mind until she comes to believe that there is an all out conspiracy against her:

Others, too, are involved. They watch her bleary-eyed from behind their square black glasses, signaling to each other with coughs and claps. It is making sense to her now. Of course, it is finally clear. That is why the light is so bright. They refract it through their glasses so she cannot see, so she cannot identify the guilty ones. All the while, they are spectators to her wretchedness.

In a final, extreme measure, Felicia accuses one of her beauty salon customers for Ernesto's death: "She, too, wears the glasses." Felicia strikes her revenge by burning Graciela Moreira's scalp with lye (150-51). Instead of accepting that this was indeed an accident, Felicia believes that this is a conspiracy against her happiness. Applying Laing's pattern of paranoia, Felicia projects onto others what she has come to internalize about herself. Due to her repeated rejection and the refusal of place in others' lives, she believes that she is without value. In turn, Felicia projects that belief onto others: they do not attribute significance to her and, further, want to prevent her from having significance in another's life. They want to ensure her "wretchedness" and so kill the one person to whom she matters.

Felicia herself murders her third husband, Otto Cruz, a man who adores her. Otto "knew he would never recover from his love for her [...]," yet she kicks him over the edge of a roller coaster (155). Applying the same line of reasoning to this situation, Felicia's murder of Otto suggests that by this point she has now become completely resigned to the belief that the happiness that comes from being loved will elude her. Her lack of remorse, moreover, seems to be a byproduct of the conviction that she does not matter: if she does not matter, than neither

does what she does matter. Felicia's being ignored and rejected by her family objectifies her and banishes her to a realm outside of human agents. This exemplifies the kind of harm that can be caused when, in Laing's words, there is "a failure to recognize a person as agent," for "the attribution of agency to human beings is one way we distinguish people from things" (*Self* 91).

Felicia's own death, the narrative clearly suggests, is precipitated by a final, pivotal point of abandonment by her family. After her *asiento*, the *Santería* ritual through which she becomes a *santera*, or priestess, Felicia appears to have recovered, or been purified, and restored to a level of wholeness and sanity.¹² Herminia, her closest friend, recounts that just after her coronation ceremony Felicia "sat on a throne surrounded by gardenias, her face serene as a goddess's. I believe to this day she'd finally found her peace" (188). After Felicia's first psychosis during "the summer of coconuts" and her subsequent lapse between her second and third husbands, Herminia contends that Felicia's devotion to *Santería* had restored her: "Our rituals healed her, made her believe again. [...] Felicia had surrendered and found her fulfillment" (186). When Felicia returns from her coronation, though, none of her family is there to welcome her home: "[...] when Felicia returned to Palmas Street with her sacred stones and her tureen, her seashells and the implements of her saint, neither her mother nor her children were there to greet her. Felicia was crestfallen" (188). In Laing's lexicon, the del Pinos fail to provide Felicia with a crucial "confirmation" of this significant event in her life (*Self* 88). Celia has already previously "discouraged her devotion to the gods" (186), her daughters have disowned her, and her son, Ivanito, has been sent off to boarding school. In addition to being deceased, Jorge had long since renounced Felicia, and Lourdes maintains such little contact with sister that she is unaware of the events transpiring in Felicia's life.

As time goes on, her family continues to forego contact with her. This has a visibly detrimental effect on Felicia, Herminia records:

When I came to visit her, we settled on the warping floorboards [...].
“Have you spoken with them?” she asked me, referring to her mother, daughters, her son.
“Your mother says they’re frightened, like the summer of coconuts.”
“But this is completely different. [...]”
I shook my head, saying nothing. Felicia covered her face with her hands. A rash erupted on her neck and cheeks. I noticed the imprint her fingers made on her forehead, the delicate chain of bloodless flesh. (189)

The correlation here between Felicia’s final decline and the absence of her family is unmistakable in Herminia’s describing “the delicate chain of bloodless flesh” atop of Felicia’s skin. Felicia’s weakness, the “delicate chain,” is connected to her lack of connection with her family, her “bloodless flesh.” Another way of putting it, bloodless flesh is delicate flesh. The impact of the family nexus on Felicia’s inner world is evinced psychosomatically: her body provides evidence of the extent of internal damage engendered by her sense of rejection by them.

After this point in the narrative, Felicia’s death is imminent. Other *santeras* in the first year following their coronation, Herminia describes, are “radiant. Their eyes are moist and clear, their skin is smoothed of wrinkles, and their nails grow strong.” Felicia, by contrast, “showed none of these blessings. Her eyes dried out like an old woman’s and her fingers curled like claws until she could hardly pick up her spoon. Even her hair, which had been as black as a crow’s, grew colorless in scruffy patches on her skull” (189). In Felicia’s last moments, Celia does re-enter Felicia’s life, but it is too late. Celia rocks Felicia in her arms as her daughter dies.

It is because of the lack she experiences within her biological family that Felicia gravitates towards Herminia, La Madrina, and the *casa de santo*, or house of the *santeros*. These people provide for her a surrogate family; this is a primary role *Santería* plays in the narrative. Herminia becomes for Felicia a replacement to her biological sister, Lourdes, as is intimated by the fact

that Herminia's name resembles the Spanish word for sister, *hermana* (Brogan, *Cultural* 113). Sisterhood is also affirmed in their interaction. "'You've been more than a sister to me, Herminia,'" Felicia tells her (189). Kathleen Brogan also identifies a significant structural thread in the novel that indicates Herminia's near kinship. Hers is the only voice outside the del Pino family given a chapter in the novel in which to speak in the first person (*Cultural* 113). García has mentioned that her interest in the significance of the family includes just this kind of a family-like relationship. In addition to the biological family, she explains: "I'm also interested in how people compose families later on, given their histories and so on" ("Nature").

In addition to Herminia's role as substitutionary sister, Felicia is taken to La Madrina, or the mother priestess (Brogan, *Cultural* 105-06), a woman who is characterized by her maternal concern for Felicia. When Felicia descends into her final state of illness, Herminia records that "La Madrina was beside herself with worry" (189). The *casa* (house or home) *de santo* also enacts a familial role. They "took turns visiting Felicia," nursing her and praying for her recovery: "We wrapped her wrists with beaded bracelets, gave her castor-oil enemas, packed hot cactus compresses on her brow" (189). *Santería* has historically functioned in the role of surrogate family for Afro-Cubans, according to Brogan. In Cuba *Santería* formed a needed replacement for slaves whose native religious practices had depended upon bloodlines:

When slavery's destruction of natal ties and inter-ethnic marriage in Cuba made Yoruban ancestor worship difficult or impossible, the Catholic *compadrazgo* (the practice of "godparenting") and religious "fraternities" provided a new kinship model: worshippers of the *orishas*/saints become "godchildren" of the priests; all believers form one "family." (*Cultural* 113)

Felicia's *Santería* family provides a meaningful stand-in for her biological family, though they ultimately prove insufficient insofar as they are unable to halt her decline following the rejection of her actual blood relations. Perhaps this speaks equally as much to the extent of the

malformation of Felicia's inner world which transpired early on in her life by her interaction with the other members of the del Pino family. Both points, nevertheless, recall Laing's assertion that the family nexus can become a "potent fact" in an individual's mental illness. Having refused her existential place, belonging, selfhood, and agency in this world, the other world, both in the sense of madness and, finally, death, is the only place she had left to go.

Wider Worlds

Upon being asked about "the recurrence of 'family' as a theme in [her] work," García responds:

It's the building block of humanity in a way. I'm interested in large historical events, but I'm interested in how they filter down to individuals and relationships between individuals, particularly in a familial context. [...] So there's a connection to bigger things, but I think who they really are, what makes them tick, is born and bred in the family. ("Nature")

García's idea that family is what "makes" characters "tick" is dramatized in the narrative, as we have now seen, in the influence members within the family nexus have on each other's inner worlds, their power to largely determine whether or not characters are able to find senses of self and place, the lack of which can drive them crazy. Another area where this concept can be pinpointed in *Dreaming* is in the bearing the family nexus has on characters' attachments to the wider world, their affiliations with large social solidarities. To transpose this concept into the language of the cosmopolitan concentric circles introduced in chapter one, it is the small ring of family and other intimate relationships that influences the way individuals interact with the wider rings.

Let it be stated clearly that family-generated attachments do not flow down an easy, given, or continuous line. That is not the story of *Dreaming*, nor of García's other novels. Celia remarks, for example: "'For me, the sea was a great comfort [...]. But it made my children restless'" (240). Relationships among them are as much a source of continuity as they are of rupture,

attachments as well as anti-attachments, affinity as much as antipathy. Nevertheless, the way the family negatively influences characters' choices, what they will not adhere to, is yet another example of how the family "makes" characters "tick."

Continuing with Felicia's character for a moment, her connection to *Santería* can be traced to her relationship with her surrogate sister, Herminia, the daughter of a *babalawo*, or high priest. *Santería* is not the religious tradition of her biological family and, as has been mentioned, is disapproved of by her mother. As in their politics, the del Pinos differ in their metaphysical beliefs. Jorge and Lourdes adhere to Catholicism, while Celia maintains a cautious atheism. At the same time, though, due to *Santería*'s hybrid aspects, Felicia's involvement with it suggests she found a way to integrate her family's Catholicism with her own mode of interacting with the divine. Brogan explains:

A new-world syncretism, *Santería* mixes Spanish folk Catholicism and Yoruba religion, resulting in a curious "doubleness" [...]. Yoruba gods and Catholic saints are "treated as replicas of one another, known as *santos* in Spanish and *orishas* in Yoruba". Each *santo/orisha* therefore has two names: Santa Bárbara can also be called upon as Changó, the god of fire and war, Oshún is the same person as Cuba's patron saint, La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre. (*Cultural* 104)¹³

The narrative also hints that Felicia possesses an innate affinity toward *Santería*, for as a little girl she loved seashells, an object that signals *Santería* because *santeros* use cowries (seashells) to discern the will of the gods (*Dreaming* 11). Still, an explicit and crucial link between Felicia and this Afro-Cuban religion is Felicia's relationship with her surrogate sister, Herminia.

This link becomes apparent when contrasting two scenes in the novel, one that occurs at the beginning, the other towards the end. Initially, Herminia has to urge her best friend to attend their ceremonies. When Felicia has just learned that her father died, Herminia beseeches her:

"Maybe his spirit is floating free. You must make your peace with him before he's gone for good. I'll call La Madrina. We'll have an emergency session tonight."

"I don't know, Herminia." Felicia believes in the gods' benevolent powers, she just

can't stand the blood.

"[...] Just a small offering to Santa Bárbara," Herminia coaxes. [...]

"Well, okay. But please, tell her no goats this time." (12)

Felicia ends up fainting during the ritual that night. It seems her body simply cannot cope with the elements required for their religious rituals: "Felicia, reeling from the sweet scent of the blood and the candles and the women, faints on La Madrina's floor, which is still warm with sacrifice" (15). This is a very different picture from Felicia's *asiento* at the end of the novel, when she watches numerous goats have their throats slit before she "tasted the goats' blood and spit it toward the ceiling, then she sampled the blood of many more creatures" (186). A significant bridge between these two divergent scenarios is Felicia's relationship with Herminia. Her small-level attachment (friendship with Herminia) helps forge this wider attachment to a large body of beliefs, believers, values, and practices.

We might consider this magical realist novel, as well as many others, affixing an additional ring onto the conventionally depicted image of concentric circles. Whereas the largest ring is often interpreted as universal humanity, *Dreaming* adds yet a larger ring, one that represents the transcendent, or divine. Moreover, it is through *Santería*, that Felicia is able to interact with the supernatural realm: "For her, [the *Santería* ceremonies] were a kind of poetry that connected her to larger worlds, worlds alive and infinite" (186). In this context, *Santería* acts as a kind of mid-range attachment through which she connects with a very wide ring indeed.

Not only do Felicia's small-level attachments mediate her larger-level attachments, aspects that suggest an outward movement on the concentric circles, but one can also consider the way that these wider attachments reverse direction, furnishing her with significant dimensions of her individual selfhood. After her initiation, Felicia's role as a *santera* generates a crucial aspect of her identity. This is exhibited in her altered dress, eating habits, and other practices: "She dressed

only in white, and didn't wear makeup or cut her hair. She never touched the forbidden foods—coconuts, corn, or anything red—and covered the one mirror in her house with a sheet, as she was prohibited from seeing her own image” (188). Other people perceive her new identity. Herminia confirms Felicia as priestess: “She had a true vocation to the supernatural” (186). Even Celia allows Felicia to be buried as a *santera* (214). There is a sequence of events at work here. As described, Felicia's small-level attachment (to her friend, Herminia) influences her large-level attachments. These large affiliations circle back to inform Felicia's individual selfhood, the smallest ring, becoming crucial factors in her identity.

Another character who proves instructive regarding the family nexus's influence on characters' attachments to the wider world, or social solidarities, is Lourdes, Felicia's sister. One of Lourdes' defining characteristics is her hyper-US patriotism, often expressed through her business, the Yankee Doodle Bakery. Lourdes herself conflates the two, as is seen in both the name of her establishment and her choosing the nation's bicentennial fourth of July as the date on which to celebrate the opening of her second bakery. Pilar describes the big event: “[...] the bakery is hung with flags and streamers and a Dixieland band is playing ‘When the Saints Go Marching In.’ Mom is in her new red, white, and blue two-piece suit, a matching handbag stiff on her elbow. She's giving away apple tartlets and brownies and cup after cup of coffee” (136). These patriotic elements—the fourth of July, flags, Dixieland band, colors, and apple pie—comprise some of the US's hallmark “invented traditions,” in Eric Hobsbawm's words and, furthermore, function similarly in the narrative to his explication of them. Contrasted with traditions that are actually old, “invented traditions,” according to Hobsbawm,

tended to be quite unspecific and vague as to the nature of the values, rights and obligations of the group membership they inculcate: ‘patriotism’, ‘loyalty’, ‘duty’ [...] and the like. [...]. The crucial element seems to have been the invention of emotionally

and symbolically charged signs of club membership rather than the statues and objects of the club. Their significance lay precisely in their undefined universality [...]. (11)

Lourdes' participation in these traditions illustrates what Hobsbawm argues is the "crucial element" of invented traditions: through them she publicly exhibits her (recently acquired) "membership" in this country.¹⁴

There are additional ways, though, that the Yankee Doodle acts as a vehicle for her nationalism which begin to shed light on the motivation driving this conspicuously strong attachment. It is through the bakery that Lourdes denounces Cuba while simultaneously affirming contrasting aspects of the US. In Pilar's description, Lourdes "is convinced she can fight Communism from behind her bakery counter" (136). One way this occurs is that the Yankee Doodle becomes a meeting place for extremist Cuban exiles (177). Another is more indirect; this involves the bakery's intersection with capitalism and sugar. Lourdes relishes her ownership of this private business, a position which would be impossible for people in Cuba to attain:

Lourdes ordered custom-made signs for her bakeries in red, white, and blue with her name printed at the bottom right-hand corner: LOURDES PUENTE, PROPRIETOR. She particularly liked the sound of the last word, the way the 'r's rolled in her mouth, the explosion of 'p's. [...] She envisioned a chain of Yankee Doodle bakeries stretching across America to St. Louis, Dallas, Los Angeles, her apple pies and cupcakes on main streets and in suburban shopping malls everywhere. (170-71)

Lourdes is a strong proponent of capitalism. The novel describes her feeling "a spiritual link to American moguls" (170). She promotes the American Dream to her Cuban nephew, Ivanito: "'Anything is possible if you work hard enough, *mi hijito*'" (229). While her affinity for capitalism contributes to her affiliation with the US, though, it must also be seen as motivated by her antipathy to Cuba.

Cuba is also implicated by the fact that Lourdes is the proprietor of not just any shop, but a bakery specializing in sugary pastries and sweets: “Grand Marnier cakes and napoleons with striped icing and chantilly cream,” “Sacher tortes,” “profiteroles, Linzer bars with raspberry jam, éclairs, and marzipan cookies in neon pink” (18). Besides sugar being a key Cuban export, it becomes a symbolic point around which Cuba’s and the US’s standards of living are pitted against each other. While Celia is blistering her aged hands working in the sugar cane fields in order to try to support the country’s export trade, yet still scrimping by in the meager economic state of the country, her daughter, Lourdes, eats and serves her sugary treats to such excess that she gains 118 pounds from her sticky bun fetish. Capitalism and sugar combine, then, in the bakery to indicate Lourdes’ contempt for Cuba and its lack which she believes is perpetuated by deceptive propaganda. Upon returning to Cuba at the end of the novel, Lourdes yells aloud to Cuban bystanders: “You could have Cadillacs with leather interiors! Air conditioning! [...] Look how they laugh, Pilar! Like idiots! [...] Their heads are filled with too much *compañero* this and *compañero* that! They’re brainwashed, that’s what they are!” (221).

Though Lourdes’ engagement in the sugar industry is a means through which she can point to Cuba’s lack, and, by contrast, her membership in the world’s wealthy superpower, the US, the historical background of Cuba’s sugar industry incriminates her. Sugar recalls the island’s long-time production of sugar which during the pre-revolution years was “the source of old oppression, slavery in the colony, and subservience to foreigners in the republic” (Pérez 337). This aspect of the sugarcane fields is depicted in García’s later novel, *Monkey Hunting*, which covers a time period prior to *Dreaming*. Chen Pan, brought to Cuba as a slave in 1857, looks out at a particular sugarcane field and ponders: “How inviting they looked from this distance. Who

could fathom the mountain of corpses that had made these fields possible?” (190). The benefits and luxuries the US offers Lourdes have come at a high price.

Though Lourdes’ patriotism is frequently accompanied by anti-Castro and anti-Communist rhetoric, the narrative reveals that her antipathy towards Cuba goes deeper than a rejection of the political position of the Revolution. Her US nationalism cannot be understood apart from a time period beginning over two decades prior to the Revolution, her childhood, and the formative events which transpired then with her parents, an understanding of which it will be helpful to revisit Laing and the impact of the family nexus on characters’ inner worlds. As with Felicia, Lourdes’ interaction with her family has a profound impact on her psychological health. Though Lourdes never exhibits signs of mental illness, she does evince far-reaching issues resulting from her traumatic interaction with her mother, Celia. Lourdes’ and Celia’s relationship was irreparably damaged when, during her mother’s mental break down, Celia hands Lourdes over to Jorge, declaring: “I will not remember her name” (43). This moment of rejection creates a fissure in their relationship from which Lourdes never recovers. Celia describes of Lourdes as an older child: “When I approach her, she turns numb, as if she wanted to be dead in my presence [...]. She still punishes me for the early years” (163). As a grown woman, Lourdes evinces the trauma this early rejection caused by her suspicious refusal to speak of Celia (138). Though, during Jorge’s last ghostly visit to Lourdes, she finally discusses this issue, if only because her father addresses it: “‘Your mother loved you,’ Jorge del Pino repeats urgently. ‘She loved me,’ Lourdes echoes,” revealing the impact this seemingly novel thought has upon her (196).

Celia’s rejection radically disorients Lourdes’ identity and existential sense of place. According to Laing, one’s identity depends on a “complementary” fulfillment by others: “The woman needs a child to give her the identity of a mother. A man needs a wife for him to be a

husband” (70). One could add that a girl needs a mother in order to be a daughter. In a point that demonstrates the way the family group is indeed a nexus of “reciprocal influence” (*Sanity* 21),

Laing continues:

[...] every relationship at least implies a definition of self by other and other by self. This complementary definitional component of the structure of one’s identity can occupy a central or peripheral position, and may assume greater or lesser dynamic significance at different periods in a person’s life. [...] *Yet, this nexus of complementary relational bonds is a point of stability, an anchor.* One sees in orphans and adopted children the tremendously strong desire to find out “Who they are”, by tracing the father and mother who conceived them. *They feel incomplete for want of a father or mother, whose absence leaves a very basic level of the self-concept permanently incomplete.* [emphasis added] (*Self* 74-75)

Lourdes’ identity as daughter is ruptured at a significant stage in her development, and her identity is left “incomplete.”

Lourdes’ incompleteness is dramatized in the narrative through her insatiable appetite for sex and food. Her positive relationship with her father certainly provides her with beneficial elements—advice, values, love, and companionship—many of the same attributes, in fact, Pilar derives from Celia, as will be seen. Still, her disconnection from her mother leaves her lacking, as indicated by her extreme behavior. Jorge’s arrival in the US to live in Lourdes’ home has a strange effect on Lourdes: “She remembers how after her father arrived in New York her appetite for sex and baked goods increased dramatically” (20). While her body swells from extra weight—“the flesh amassed rapidly on her hips and buttocks, muting the angles of her bones”—Rufino’s swells from being overworked in the bedroom—“Rufino’s body ached from the exertions” (20-21). There is a correlation between Jorge’s arrival and Lourdes’ bottomless desire. The narrative suggests that Lourdes’ appetite reflects a spiritual yearning emanating from a deep emptiness: “Lourdes was reaching through Rufino for something he could not give her, she wasn’t sure what” (21). While Lourdes’ is a complex emotional and psychological state that

might be associated with her absent cultural connection with Cuba and the traumatic experiences she cannot forget, one significant element she is missing is a relationship with her mother and the “complementary” self-conception as daughter. This is suggested by the fact that neither Rufino’s body nor Jorge’s presence satiates Lourdes’ hunger. It seems, instead, that her father’s arrival brings to the surface a need that she had tried to forget, a relationship with her mother.

In addition to the issue of incomplete identity, Celia’s rejection of Lourdes destabilizes her existential position, in contrast to her relationship with her mother providing for her “stability” and an “anchor.” In fact, disorientation and confusion characterize that crucial moment in the narrative. When Celia makes her pronouncement, “she held their child by one leg” and “handed her to Jorge” (43). Baby Lourdes, dangling upside down, will struggle with her sense of place for the rest of the novel. Lourdes transfers her troubled existential position (her place in the world as daughter of Celia) to her geographical position (in Cuba), confusing anti-Celia with anti-Cuba. Her escape from Cuba is actually an escape from her mother and the hurtful abandonment that she equates with her. Lourdes’ desire to cut herself off from her past in Cuba is another defining feature of her character. It is the context in which she is first introduced to the reader: “The continents strain to unloose themselves, to drift reckless and heavy in the seas. [...] Lourdes Puente awakens” (17). Not only does she leave Cuba, in fact, but her separation is extreme. She goes to a place that is the opposite of Cuba, not only in its politics but also in its climate. “Colder,” she repeatedly demands as Rufino is driving them across the US “as if the word were a whip driving them north” (69-70). She allows them to stop only after they have passed Georgia, Carolina, and Washington D.C., when they arrive in New York where “it seems to her as if the air were made of crystal filaments, scraping and cleaning her inside” (129). The cold, she believes, will purify her from tropical Cuba.

In Brooklyn, Lourdes joins the auxiliary police. The images of Lourdes' patrolling the streets and water's edge—"[...] she works her way along the length of river that forms the western boundary of her territory" (133)—are interfaced with that of Celia guarding the Cuban coast. The novel opens with this sentence: "Celia del Pino, equipped with binoculars and wearing her best housedress and drop pearl earrings, sits in her wicker swing guarding the north coast of Cuba" (3). This juxtaposition symbolizes the way that Lourdes (and her American patriotism) is in a standoff with her mother (and Celia's Cuban nationalism). Mitchell's point that in *Dreaming's* del Pino family, public issues masquerade as private conflicts explains this aspect precisely: "[...] the text of nationalism becomes more of a 'public' excuse for acting out familial strife, thus suggesting that the submerged text informing and structuring national life is that of the familial" (53-54). Besides Lourdes' "strife" with Celia motivating her social solidarities in a negative, reactionary way, though, the conflation of anti-Cuba with anti-Celia, her affinities and aversions are also influenced by her strong, supportive relationship with her father, the figure with whom she bonded after Celia's abandonment and institutionalization. She shares his antipathetic sentiments about El Líder and the Communists as well as his affinity for America, hygiene, and baseball. Her "happiest memories" are the Sunday afternoons when she would go to games with her father (68). It is Jorge, in fact, who advises Lourdes to join the task force as a way to prepare to fight the Communists: "'Look how El Líder mobilizes the people to protect his causes [...]. [...] How will we ever win Cuba back if we ourselves are not prepared to fight?'" (132).

Of course, Lourdes does acquire direct motivation for detesting Revolutionary Cuba, which means that the family nexus is not the only factor influencing her social solidarities. Jorge represents the many middle class Cubans employed by US firms before Castro took power: "For

many years before the revolution, Jorge had traveled five weeks out of six, selling electric brooms and portable fans for an American firm” (6). When the new government severed ties with the US, many middle-class Cubans lost their jobs, including Jorge the narrative suggests.

Pérez describes a historical dimension of this issue:

[...] the rupture [between North America and the Revolutionary government] shattered the basis of collaboration between the Cuban middle classes and the United States. For nearly 150,000 Cuban employees of North American enterprises, including managers, clerks, technicians, accountants, and attorneys, the expropriations [of North American property] were traumatic. Many suffered immediate decline in their standard of living, for Cubans in the employ of foreigners had traditionally enjoyed higher salaries. (328-29)

Similar to the way Castro’s regime meant personal and financial loss for Jorge, Lourdes’ husband and family had their property expropriated by the new revolutionary government (70). In the process, Lourdes is violently raped by a Cuban soldier. Myriad factors coalesce in Lourdes’ patriotism, a point which underscores something the novel does very well: it illustrates the messiness of attachments, the way affiliations are a complex amalgamation of many factors. Nevertheless, what I mean to emphasize here is the way Lourdes’ small-level attachments to her mother and father inform her larger-level attachment, to the US, and detachment, from Cuba.

Insofar as Lourdes’ American nationalism as well as Felicia’s *asiento* and decline are representative of the way that *Dreaming* depicts the family, and its surrogates, as a prime mechanism in attachment formation, the narrative suggests individuals have limited independent choice in their social solidarities. This view of how characters come to identify with larger political, religious, and other groupings is also suggestive in terms of characters’ formation of selfhood. Because, as mentioned in chapter one, the loci of characters’ attachments signal the resources from which characters derive belonging and identity, it follows that these aspects, too, are influenced by factors that exceed individual choice. The quote from Laing with which I

began this chapter depicts this aspect of the del Pinos, the way family members are like actors in a “play,” performing a script they have never read.

Dreaming’s depiction of identity formation is the opposite of what Kwame Anthony Appiah describes as the fallacious conception of identity which he refers to as “the existentialist picture,” the notion that one’s identity is radically creative: “[...] as the doctrine goes, existence precedes essence: that is, you exist first and then have to decide what to exist as, who to be, afterward.” Appiah sees this as “wrong” because in this view “there is only creativity, [...] there is nothing for us to respond to, nothing out of which to do the construction.” Yet, “identity must make some kind of sense. And for it to make sense, it must be an identity constructed in response to facts outside oneself, things that are beyond one’s own choices” (*Ethics* 17-18).

Instead, in *Dreaming* the “accidents of birth,” that phrase Nussbaum employs to refer to the arbitrariness of natal ties, are decisive factors in a character’s individual identity and sense of place in the world. In this, *Dreaming*’s inflection of the “accidents of birth” is resonant with Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road*, as both narratives stress the critical role of natal ties; at the same time, *Dreaming* differs from *Famished* in that Okri’s narrative, filtered through an abiku metaphysics, imbues inherited attachments with the transcendent and fatalistic notion of destiny, an aspect that *Dreaming* lacks. Pilar’s exasperated commentary on this comes to mind as an example of this contrast: “I wonder how Mom could be Abuela Celia’s daughter. And what I’m doing as my mother’s daughter. Something got horribly scrambled along the way” (178). Or again: “We’re all tied to the past by flukes” (220). These points almost return *Dreaming* to Nussbaum’s phraseology, in their emphasis on the accidental; however, García’s narrative forestalls this comparison in that, “flukes” or not, once characters in *Dreaming* are born into particular families, the influence of those ties becomes inevitable.

Dreaming's rendering of the "accidents of birth," along with its politicization of the family and its depiction of how characters' inner worlds and attachments to the wider world are formed coalesce into a salient picture of the means through which characters forge senses of being and belonging in the world, the family nexus. Because this process is harmful at least as often as it is beneficial, *Dreaming*'s strategy of belonging is pronouncedly descriptive, suggesting how characters do belong, more than how they should belong. At the same time, because characters such as Pilar and Celia deeply benefit from their interconnectedness, as will be seen next, *Dreaming*'s strategy does also carry a prescriptive tone, proposing that characters ideally achieve belonging through abiding and mutually beneficial familial interaction.

The Magical Braid

The central position inhabited by the family nexus in *Dreaming* informs both the novel's form and narrative modality. García's novels, from *Dreaming* to *A Handbook to Luck* (2007), share a multi-narrative form. Reminiscent of Faulkner in this way, her stories are the cumulation of the different voices of its principal characters. According to García, this form enables her (and the reader, by extension) to examine "how things work juxtapositionally and relationally" ("Nature"), a comparative view which provides another means through which to identify the complex interconnection among the family. An example of this occurs when Pilar purchases a Beny Moré album in Brooklyn. The man from whom Pilar purchases the record is described as having "features [...] compressed beneath a bulbous forehead" (197). Because the narrative lens vacillates between the characters' perspectives, readers recognize the parallels occurring here. In Cuba, Pilar's *tía* Felicia, who adored this singer, has just recently died, after her body had deformed so that "the right side of her head swelled with mushroomy lumps" (189). Pilar is completely unaware of this distant, yet remarkable familial symmetry. This symmetry is one of

many similar instances when García utilizes the multi-narrative form's ability to generate a gap between character and reader awareness in order to underscore for the reader the idea that the ties which unite family are profound, affecting the details of choice and identity of which individuals are not even cognizant. García has referred elsewhere to this type of interrelatedness as "the nature of inheritance," a concept she describes as

not just [...] who gets the nose, or the predilection to play the harp, but more emotional inheritances, and how those get played out subjectively in different times and places. [...] I'm very interested in what gets passed down that we're not even aware of, and how that infiltrates and affects people almost unbeknownst to them. ("Nature")

This notion explains an individual's identity and attachments in terms of a genetic, but near-magical conception of inherited familial traits, and offers another example of the way familial attachments influence characters' inner worlds and attachments to the wider world.

The aesthetic mode through which *Dreaming* is narrated, magical realism, also reflects the narrative's thematic emphasis on the family nexus. More specifically, as in all the novels analyzed in this study, *Dreaming* pulls together the threads of the magical and the real in a way that works towards constructing its strategy of belonging. Before delving into this microscopic study, though, exploring this how magical realism functions within this particular narrative, I would like to first step back and view the narrative macroscopically, situating it in relation to the wider constellation of magical realism.

García flags what is at least a superficial connection between *Dreaming* and the other García, Gabriel García Márquez, when she reports that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was one of the novels that remained on her writing desk while she was composing *Dreaming* (along with Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and a Wallace Stevens poetry collection) ("...And There" 111). This relationship between the two Garcías suggests viewing *Dreaming* as a continuation of Latin American magical realism. Pushing this connection further, one might trace a more

geographically specific literary genealogy of Cuban magical realism by linking Cristina García with another possible literary predecessor, Alejo Carpentier. Indeed, in the work of these two authors one finds several points of comparability. Afro-Cuban characters and religious beliefs inform instances of their narrative magic. The realist components of their texts also parallel in their common reflections of Caribbean history and culture. This latter shared aspect of Afro-Cuban culture evokes yet another similarity among García's and Carpentier's narratives: they comprise a common circum-Atlantic spatial triangulation, a configuration that pulls into this comparison the magical realist geography traced in the previous chapter on Okri's *Famished*.¹⁵ While Okri's text can be navigated between the points of Britain, Nigeria, and the Caribbean, García's includes the US, Africa, and the Caribbean (Cuba), and Carpentier's France, Africa, and the Caribbean (Cuba and Haiti).¹⁶ The complex Atlantic history of the Caribbean and, by extension, García's and Carpentier's narratives remind that any circumference traced around Cuban magical realism must be a perforated parameter.

Carpentier and Cristina García diverge, however, over the issue of the territorialization of magic, to recall Chanady's concept. Carpentier utilizes *lo real maravilloso* to create a boundary for the exclusive marvels of Latin America, while García's magic is geographically unrestricted, appearing in Brooklyn as well as in Cuba.¹⁷ Besides this geo-political difference, magic in García's novel is religiously pluralist, as is seen in the way that the single magical phenomenon of Jorge's post-death appearances are refracted through Catholicism, Afro-Cuban *Santería*, and atheist worldviews. Sister Federica, the nun, is the first to report Jorge's resurrection from the dead, an event she confidently affirms is a "religious enigma" that ensures Jorge's sainthood (19). The narrative resists this as the exclusive assessment of Jorge's ghostly reappearances, though, suggesting alternate readings. Felicia and Herminia associate the same phenomenon with

Santería beliefs, while Celia, who leans towards atheism, simply accepts the event without trying to fit it into any metaphysical rubric. In contrast, Carpentier often filters his magic through Afro-Caribbean voodoo, and in “Journey” depicts Catholicism alongside other European entrapments from which Marcial is freed. Though it should be noted, García is unusual in this depiction of magic not only in comparison to Carpentier, but among most magical realist narratives.

Nevertheless, these two Cuban magical realists can be seen as illustrative of different approaches to the mode among successive generations, a shift which suggests their differing historico-political concerns, Carpentier’s with constructing a regional identity and difference from Europe, and García’s with integrating the myriad threads of her hyphenated Cuban-American identity.

While the presence of Afro-Cuban, circum-Atlantic magic in *Dreaming* evokes Okri’s *Famished*, these two narratives differ in their degree of magical saturation. Unlike the supernaturally permeated storyworld of *Famished*, the magic in *Dreaming* is sparse. This distinction is important for Shannin Schroeder, who sees the novel’s minimalist magic as presenting a problem for its classification as a full-blooded magical realist text, though she does, finally, if reluctantly, grant its inclusion:

[...] *Dreaming in Cuban*’s questionable magical realist status results from García’s almost hesitant use of the supernatural. The magical realism seems compromised by the fact that, generally, only one or two characters experience the supernatural at any one time. Lourdes’s and Celia’s visits with Jorge del Pino are private, personal moments with no other witnesses. [...]. But García also incorporates other indefinable elements into *Dreaming in Cuban*, redeeming the magical realism by interspersing these examples throughout the text. (70)

Whereas Schroeder takes issue with *Dreaming*’s minimalist magic, Wendy Faris does not see sparseness as a classificatory quandary, but rather a characteristic use of narrative magic in magical realism, one she refers to as the “magical detail”:

[...] for the most part the moments of magic in realistic texts—handprints on a cake and Beloved’s arrival in *Beloved*, descriptions of Saleem’s conversations with the members of

the Midnight's Children's Conference in his head, blood trails or magic carpets in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the appearance of two halves of a magically fusing shiny object or double fetus floating in a pool in *Distant Relations*—are small but powerful. [...] we are not overwhelmed with descriptions of magical occurrences, but, instead, those phenomena are integrated in relatively small doses into realistic scenarios and events. (*Ordinary* 69)¹⁸

Faris's assertion that small magical "details" can be quite potent applies to *Dreaming*, wherein fantastical phenomena enact a key function within the narrative. As the following survey will show, moments of narrative magic frequently function in a way that both amplifies and forges the strong attachments, positive and negative, that bind characters together.

After Jorge dies in April of 1972, he appears regularly to Lourdes in ghostly form for over seven years, during which time father and daughter discuss a range of issues, often very sensitive in nature, such as Jorge's poor relationship with Celia and Lourdes' rape. These conversations continue until

by the fall of 1979, Jorge del Pino speaks less and less with his daughter on her evening walks home from the bakeries. He complains of an energy waning within him, and is convinced that the time he's stolen between death and oblivion is coming to an end. His voice crackles softly, like the peeling of an eggshell, and Lourdes has to stand perfectly still to hear his words. (193)

A magical communicative phenomenon also marks Celia's relationship with her eldest granddaughter, Pilar. While unlike Jorge and Lourdes, theirs is not a conversation between the living and the dead, their interaction is equally supernatural. After her granddaughter moves away, "for many years, Celia spoke to Pilar during the darkest part of the night" (119). Celia communicates with Pilar telepathically across the expanse separating Cuba from New York. This magical ability works in the reverse direction, too. Pilar has been able to intuit Celia's thoughts since infancy. "When I was a baby," Pilar recalls, "I bounced [Celia's] pearls with my fingertips and heard the rhythm of my grandmother's thoughts" (218).

These two scenarios comprise a pattern which, as will be seen, is shared among all of the instances of narrative magic which will be traced here. In every one of these cases, *Dreaming* braids together three narrative threads: thick relational attachments, magic, and various forms of communication. This triad functions slightly differently in each situation, but what is common among them is the way it serves as a tool through which the narrative explores various facets of one of its central preoccupations, the significant role the family nexus plays in the lives of the individuals comprising it. Lourdes and Jorge as well as Pilar and Celia evince profoundly intimate and nurturing familial relationships, the first thread in this tri-fold narrative tool. *Dreaming* differs markedly in this depiction of relational potential from modernist or postmodernist pictures of individuals as limited to fragmented, fractured interaction or Prufrockian isolation. The narrative does include those types, as Celia's exile attests; however, as will be seen subsequently and has been suggested already with Celia, Felicia, and Lourdes, destructive interaction among the family nexus forges as strong a bond as nurturing interaction. The magical braid functions in both types of circumstances, then, for whether positive or negative, it is thick attachments among characters, with which *Dreaming* interweaves the additional two threads of this braid, magic and communication.

That communication is one of the aspects integrated into these moments of narrative magic reinforces the nature of these relationships, their closeness, as communication is a crucial component of interpersonal ties. It is only the attachments characterized by strong bonds wherein communication is made magical. Supernatural communication in *Dreaming* always occurs among individuals, without mediation. In contrast, the narrative does not magically enhance modes of mass communication occurring through the vehicles of television, radio, or books, impersonal forms in which a communicator disseminates ideas to vast, faceless seas of people,

though these modes as well as many others are explored in the novel. For example, Ivanito's favorite radio voice is Wolfman Jack: "Sometimes I want to be like the Wolfman and talk to a million people at once" (191). As with other narrative aspects, communication, too, is explored in its varying shades. Javier del Pino and Ivanito have aptitudes for foreign languages, and Pilar explores the language of visual arts. "Painting is its own language," she insists (59). Still, it is only modes of communication occurring between individuals among whom there is a very close bond into which the narrative infuses the supernatural.

In using magic in moments of communication between people who share a thick attachment, magic functions as a highlighter, drawing attention to aspects that are already present. This is seen with Lourdes and Jorge. Having had an extremely strong father-daughter bond in life, their relationship and dialogue continues for years beyond the barrier of mortality: "Even after his death, they understand each other perfectly, as they always have" (131). However, magical communication is not only ornamental, but also functional. Jorge's ghostly appearances actually enable their conversations, and thus intimate bond, to continue beyond what would typically be possible. While language destroys Lourdes' relationship with her mother ("I will not remember her name"), its supernatural occurrences allow her to maintain a relationship with her father. There is yet a third way that narrative magic functions in the magical braid, one which is related to the first: it enacts the magical realist technique the literalization of metaphor.¹⁹ Magic makes literal the metaphoric and spiritual connection between these characters. The telepathic communication between grandmother and granddaughter draws into material reality such sayings as "they could read each other's thoughts," a colloquial phrase used to describe two people who are especially close. In the novel, these pairs of characters have relational ties that remain

unbroken even after they are physically separated from each other, Lourdes and Jorge by death and Pilar and Celia by space.

This use of magic represents the way magical realism often functions as a supplement to reality, one of the critical aspects of the summational *modus operandi*. The naturalist's trinity of matter, space, and time is not the reigning framework of the narrative, but *Dreaming* depicts a range of lived experience: the way, for example, one can feel close to someone else, even though separated by distance or death. The notion of magic as supplement to reality is one which García aligns herself with outside the novel: "I see the fantastic as an extension of reality. For me there isn't this great divide between what's true or what isn't true. It's more about what's possible, what's remotely possible, or what's very remotely possible. And I'm interested in exploring those borderlands" ("Nature"). This supplemental use of magical realism's two codes, the supernatural and the real, evokes another point of correspondence among García and Laing, indeed among the magical realist modality in general and Laing. Laing's psychiatric approach towards his patients involved a respectful treatment of their senses of lived experience, as opposed to the methodology of other psychiatrists who demanded that patients' internal feelings match the facts of external reality. Of the issue evoked by this contrast, Laing writes: "If our wishes, feelings, desires, hopes, fears, perception, imagination, memory, dreams...do not correspond to the law," or to the facts of reality (dates, events), "they are outlawed, and excommunicated. Outlawed and excommunicated, they do not cease to exist. But they do undergo secondary transformations" (*Politics* 74). While Laing is concerned here with psychological disturbances that manifest when personal experience is "outlawed," his idea about "secondary transformations" could be translated within magical realism as the irreducible element. That which is made illicit in a naturalist framework morphs into actually occurring supernatural details. When magic functions

as supplement in a narrative, it forces recognition within the story world of that which has been disallowed by realism.

We have now seen the way that the supernatural communication occurring among Jorge/Lourdes and Celia/Pilar illustrates the beneficial nature of their thick attachments, when narrative magic depicts bonds stronger than death and people close enough to read each other's minds. Before moving on to examples of how the magical braid depicts equally strong attachments forged through traumatic interaction, there is another crucial scene involving Pilar and her *abuela* which pinpoints more specifically what it is the family nexus, specifically the blood ties among intergenerational women, potentially offers individuals.

When Pilar is finally able to visit her grandmother after almost two decades of absence from Cuba, Celia recounts a summary of her life history to Pilar: how she dried tobacco leaves when she was a girl; her mother's abandonment of her; her previous lover, Gustavo; the asylum; the pain of being separated from Pilar when Lourdes took her family to the US. "As I listen," describes Pilar, "I feel my grandmother's life passing through her hands. It's a steady electricity, humming and true" (222).²⁰ Herein are the three strands of the magical braid. The communication occurring is verbal, physical, and spiritual: Celia's history is transmitted through language, through physical touch, and through a spiritual familial bond. The magical aspect of this moment involves the way Celia's life passes to Pilar through Celia's hands in an energy likened to an electrical wire, a reference to Pilar's connection through Celia to Cuba, as will be seen later, in its alluding to Pilar as the daughter of Changó, the Afro-Cuban god of lightning as well as fire. That Celia's hand is the transmitting agent suggests that it is their shared flesh, based on the maternal bloodline, that enables the grandmother's (the matriarch's) life force to be transmitted to her granddaughter, an aspect which suggests the third thread, their strong

attachment. Pilar's description of this flow as "humming and true," furthermore, characterizes Celia's legacy as a trustworthy force in Pilar's life.

This moment of spiritual/bodily life flow demonstrates what Faris identifies as "a tradition of mystic language" within magical realist texts written by women, an idea she discusses using the concept "la myst rique." She borrows this term from Luce Irigaray's feminist theory and applies it to magical realism, defining it generally as "the mystical union of body and soul" which Irigaray "associates with a female mode of being" (212-13).²¹ While granting that the fusion of body and soul "is not a uniquely female issue," Faris suggests that magical realism might be fruitfully analyzed from this feminist perspective:

[...] the sense of recovering lost traditions that permeates much of magical realism allies it with recent feminist efforts aimed at recovering lost figures and traditions within which this kind of union can be envisioned as embodied in female form, with the "ontological shift" in feminist-oriented theology that imagines divinity as female. (213)

This feminist project of recovery correlates with certain magical realist narratives, Faris describes:

To invent a tradition of mystic language within a text, these female magical realist fictions often portray several generations, and stories are passed down from one to the next: Clara, Blanca, and Alba in *The House of the Spirits*; Baby Suggs, Sethe, and Denver in *Beloved*; Abuela Celia, Lourdes, and Pilar in *Dreaming in Cuban*. (*Ordinary* 213)

The bequeathal of stories, or family history, handed down through the conduit of the maternal bloodline are the unifying elements of the moment of mystical language that transpires with Celia and Pilar in Cuba.

Cuban-American Gustavo P rez Firmat suggests why this type of generational continuity might be especially crucial for a "one-and-a-half" like Pilar, those who were born abroad but grew up in the US and so are positioned between first and second generation immigrants (*Life* 4-5).²² Celia supplies Pilar with the tools she needs to engage with the unique challenges of

“biculturation,” or the experience of “balancing” two cultures (*Life* 6).²³ Pilar expresses this sense of inbetweenness when she is at a Lou Reed concert: “‘I’m from Brooklyn, man!’ Lou shouts and the crowd goes wild. I don’t cheer, though. I wouldn’t cheer either if Lou said ‘Let’s hear it for Cuba.’ Cuba. Planet Cuba. Where the hell is that?” (134). Because of *Dreaming*’s phenomenological treatment of space seen earlier, immigrant figures are not the only characters to experience disconnectedness; however, for Pilar “biculturation” has been a significant contributing factor in her struggle with the question of belonging.

Torres similarly expresses the way immigration presses the need for linkage. She herself was one of the “Peter Pan” children, the Cuban youth who were sent by plane to the US ahead of their parents. Like fictional Wendy, John, and Michael, these Cuban children flew away from home (the nursery) to the US (the mythical Never-Never Land). Torres describes experiencing multiple levels of displacement as a Cuban émigré to the US. This, she suggests, is not unique to Cuban immigrants, but is a feeling shared by other Latinos with whom she works in the US—“Mexicanos, Puertoriquenos, and Centro-Americanos.” In Torres’ own explanation: “We have few words or concepts with which to understand or name what we are experiencing.” Though, she describes their common feeling as being “in search of coherence” (14-15).

Pilar seems to share with Torres the quest for coherence. Throughout her teen years she has been plagued with the question of her place: “Most days Cuba is kind of dead to me. But every once in a while a wave of longing will hit me and it’s all I can do not to hijack a plane to Havana or something” (137-38). This confusion suggests that her participation in the anarchist Punk movement of the 1970s, whose slogan “I’M A MESS!” she inscribes on her Liberty painting (141), is more than the angst of an American teenager, but she identifies with this movement also because of her experience of “biculturation.” Katherine B. Payant comments on this aspect of

Pilar's character: "This search for identity and 'belongingness' is common to all adolescents, but in a child like Pilar, it is complicated by a hyphenated existence" (169). *Dreaming's* magical realist "la mystérique" offers a resolution to Pilar's lack of coherence. It is through the maternal bloodline that Pilar acquires the resources she needs to make sense of how she fits in the world. Importantly, while the need to belong is exacerbated by her hyphenated identity and the duality that represents, it is largely resolved through her attachment to people, specifically to the women of the del Pino family nexus.

One of the most crucial stabilizing elements that Pilar derives from her magical connection to Celia is their family history. However, the bequeathal of family history not only benefits Pilar, as the receiver, furnishing her with a sense of place in the world, but also Celia, as the giver. After Felicia dies, Celia tells Pilar: "Women who outlive their daughters are orphans [...]. Only their granddaughters can save them, guard their knowledge like the first fire" (222). Felicia's death causes Celia to feel "orphaned" not only because of the relational separation it indicates, the narrative suggests here, but because it breaks the chain in which familial history, Celia's "knowledge," is handed down. Without this, Celia is isolated with her memories, unable to connect them to a wider relational web. That Celia, who remains geographically rooted, requires passing on her stories as much as Pilar, a "one-and-a-half," requires receiving them reminds that *Dreaming* diverges from the conventional exile narrative, as both figures equally, if for different reasons, evince the need for the coherence provided through their shared family history.

Because of fissures in the maternal bloodline due to Felicia's mental illness and death and Lourdes' relational disconnectedness, the responsibility to "guard" the family's "knowledge" falls to Pilar, Celia's granddaughter. This is a fundamental aspect of Pilar's return trip to Cuba. During this short time, she takes on the mantle of family historian, collecting family artifacts,

oral history, and images. In the six days in April when Pilar and Lourdes visit Cuba, Celia gifts to Pilar several artifacts: “Abuela gives me a box of letters she wrote to her onetime lover in Spain, but never sent. She shows me his photograph, too. It’s very well preserved. [...] She also gives me a book of poems she’s had since 1930, when she heard García Lorca read at the Principal de la Comedia Theater” (235). Celia’s letters to Gustavo function similarly to a diary, recording details that range from private to mundane, and because she has been writing them once a month for twenty-five years, they constitute a large collection of Celia’s past. It is in one of these letters, written on the day of Pilar’s birth, that Celia preternaturally foretells Pilar’s role as family historian. This letter composes the last page of the novel:

My dearest Gustavo,

[...] My granddaughter, Pilar Puente del Pino, was born today. [...] I will no longer write to you, *mi amor*. She will remember everything.

My love always,
Celia (245)

Insofar as Pilar replaces Celia’s letter writing, Celia indicates that the primary function of her letters, which have never been mailed, are the preservation of her personal history.

Celia’s release offers an explanation for the final, somewhat enigmatic, scene of the novel when, as Pilar and Lourdes are flying back home to New York, Celia walks into the sea, immersing herself in the water, and lets her drop pearl earrings be carried away in the current:

Celia reaches up to her left earlobe and releases her drop pearl earring into the sea. She feels its absence between her thumb and forefinger. Then she unfastens the tiny clasp in her right ear and surrenders the other pearl. Celia closes her eyes and imagines it drifting as a firefly through the darkened seas, imagines its slow extinguishing. (244)

Celia’s earrings are highly symbolic in the narrative. They represent a key aspect of Celia’s history, a gift from Gustavo which she has retained even after Jorge’s myriad attempts at erasing this part of her past. When Celia releases the earrings (her history) into the ocean, they are swept away in the current, presumably towards Pilar’s home. This intimates that the light of her

memories represented by the metaphor of “fireflies” will slowly fade as Celia’s legacy is carried down the generations of the del Pino family through Pilar, before finally “extinguishing” altogether. This scene implies that Celia commits suicide, though this is left ambiguous, an act which would only strengthen this reading, for Celia is now able to relinquish her life and the burden of memory because its continuance has been secured through Pilar.

During Pilar’s visit, she works to document familial memories through portraiture: “I paint a series of watercolor sketches of my grandmother.” Some of these images are modified to fit Celia’s self-perception. Pilar asks her *abuela*, “So tell me how you want to be remembered [...]. I can paint you any way you like.” After Pilar produces a few drafts, Celia comments: “‘Can’t you make my hair a little darker, Pilar? My waist a little more slender? *Por Dios*, I look like an old woman!’” (232-33). In this instance, the preservation of memory is shown to be not an impartially or precisely recorded fact, but something filtered through family members’ perceptions, a point which recalls the narrative’s stress on experience. Furthermore, familial perception is valued above external accuracy. García has described her view of the “legacy” of oral history within the family as being composed of “distorted memories.” It involves “how a family sees itself [...] it’s about constructed identity” (“Nature”). Family identity in this sense, as we see with Pilar and Celia, is corporately adapted and corporately maintained. This is suggestive when considering *Dreaming*’s strategy of belonging, for inasmuch as personal identity is derived from familial attachments, a sense of self within the wider world stems from one’s participation with one’s family. Though, participation does not necessarily mean proximity. *Dreaming* ends with Pilar’s leaving Celia, perhaps never to see her again. During her visit to Cuba, Pilar has an epiphanic moment when an important realization about her identity crystallizes: “I’m afraid to lose all this, to lose Abuela Celia again. But sooner or later I’d have to

return to New York. I know now it's where I belong—not *instead* of here, but *more* than here” (236). Paradoxically, part of the long yearned for sense of belonging Pilar attains on this trip through her mystical connection to Celia involves her choosing to remain geographically separated from her beloved *abuela*.

During her visit to Cuba, Pilar is not only concerned with Celia's past, but collects the family's wider oral history. Ivanito describes: “Afterward, Pilar pulls me aside and asks me to take her to Herminia Delgado's house. She says she wants to learn the truth about my mother, to learn the truth about herself.” Ivanito recounts of their trip to Herminia: “We listen to stories about my mother as a child, about her marriages to my father and to other men, about the secret ceremonies of her religion and, because Pilar insists on every detail, about my mother's final rite, and her last months on Palmas Street” (231). Again in this moment, the narrative echoes the idea of the constitution of self-identity through family, specifically here through familial oral history. The details of Felicia's life provide Pilar with material she needs to (re)construct of her own identity, “to learn the truth about herself” (231). Isabel Alvarez-Borland describes the significance of Pilar's learning her family's oral history when she writes: “The stories of Abuela Celia and Tía Felicia will provide her with a context within which her life can be assumed” (49).

Finally, Pilar's role as family historian, a position she attains on her trip to Cuba, points to the way that she herself functions as a living historical artifact or, as Payant refers to her, “the repository of the family story” (166). The spiritual passing of life from Celia to Pilar already described suggests the way Pilar carries on the family legacy in her own body. In addition to this “*la mystérique*” though, Pilar embodies their family history in the way that she exhibits various family traits. Recalling “the nature of inheritance,” Pilar has her mother's strong will, Celia's

love of the sea, and Felicia's inclination for *Santería*. In this way, the family literally lives on in Pilar.

The family bloodline, especially the maternal lineage, potentially offers characters the source through which they can achieve a stabilizing and cohering sense of self-amidst-world. This is a benefit primarily attributable to a mutually constructed and mutually preserved family history. These points refer back to the narrative's strategy of belonging which posits the crucial role of the family nexus for individuals' senses of place, identity, and meaning. Ideally, a full representation of the family and its history would include the many voices of the members who comprise it. It would be like piano music, as Celia's beloved Tía Alicia teaches her, "*each note distinct from the others yet part of the whole*" (243). Sadly, though, the vying members of the novel's fictional family, in their troubled communication, are unable to accomplish such harmony. Jorge/Lourdes and Celia/Pilar have represented the benefits of thick ties forged through magical communication. There is a shadow side to this, though, as *Dreaming* reveals, for strong ties are also generated through destructive interaction.

The Traumatic Braid

The novel opens with Jorge's postmortem appearance to his wife, Celia, on the night of his death: "Her husband emerges from the light and comes toward her, taller than the palms, walking on water in his summer suit and Panama hat" (5). As with the previous examples, this scene follows the pattern in the narrative in which magic is braided together with thick relational attachments and communication. It differs from the previous examples described, though, in that unlike the constructive communication that occurs between Jorge/Lourdes and Celia/Pilar, this magical appearance dramatizes a communication breakdown. Jorge is attempting to give Celia a message, but she cannot decipher it:

Her husband moves his mouth carefully but she cannot read his immense lips. His jaw churns and swells with each word, faster, until Celia feels the warm breeze of his breath on her face. Then he disappears. Celia runs to the beach in her good leather pumps. [...] “Jorge, I couldn’t hear you. I couldn’t hear you.”

This moment of failed interaction and, thus, disappointment is compounded by Celia’s description of Jorge coming “empty-handed” (5). Both husband and wife are faulted in this moment of failed communication, though: Celia fails to interpret (“she cannot read his immense lips”) and Jorge fails to speak (“his jaw churns and swells” but he does not emit speech).

The magic in this scene functions as a literalization of metaphor akin to the prior examples, yet this scenario dramatizes the inverse situation, their inability to communicate. This usage of magic reflects the nature of their relationship prior to Jorge’s death, their fractured marriage. To be fair, there are aspects of their union that have been positive. Despite their myriad issues, Jorge is a man whom Celia grows to love, as Celia writes in one of her letters: “[It is] not a passion like ours, Gustavo, but love just the same” (54). Insofar as the phenomenal moment of Jorge’s appearance follows the other moments containing the magical braid, it is their love (thick attachment) that accounts for the fact that Jorge appears, and tries to speak, to Celia at all. Indeed, this may also explain why, despite the failure in conveying this message, Celia is still able to intuit the significant points of it, as is apparent when Felicia arrives at her mother’s house the next morning to tell her Lourdes had called to inform them of Jorge’s death and Celia responds: “I know already [...]. [...] He was here last night. [...] he came to say good-bye” (9). Nevertheless, troubled communication typified their married life. Pilar narrates that when her *abuelo* was living with them, he frequently wrote Celia love letters, but she seemed incapable of deciphering them, or at least of responding in like emotion: “He used to write her letters every day [...]. They were romantic letters, too. He read one out loud to me. He called Abuela Celia his ‘dove in the desert.’ [...] Abuela Celia writes back to him every once in a while, but her letters

are full of facts, about this meeting or that, nothing more. They make my grandfather sad” (33). This moment evokes another relational metaphor, if one not dramatized through magic, the way they spoke two different languages, Jorge of passion, Celia of logic and facts. Compounding the “sadness” of this aspect of their relationship is that Jorge is responsible for Celia’s indifference towards him.

Their vexed relationship makes sense of the fact that Jorge appears to his wife only once after his death, and this with limited success, while he visits his daughter Lourdes for many years. Jorge has to beseech Lourdes to act as his mouthpiece to Celia. During their last conversation, he pleads with Lourdes to pass on his final apologies to his wife, instead of his apologizing to her himself: “Please return and tell your mother everything, tell her I’m sorry” (197). This suggests that Jorge’s productive postmortem conversations can only occur through the channel of positive relational ties, that which he has maintained with Lourdes, not with Celia. This also explains why Jorge does not appear at all to his son Javier, nor to his other daughter Felicia, an omission which she interprets as another rejection: “You mean he was in the neighborhood and didn’t even stop by?” (9).

The second example of traumatic relational bonds marked by narrative magic involves Lourdes. While Lourdes, who is blindfolded, is being raped by a Cuban soldier, she gains an extraordinary, impossible knowledge of the perpetrator through her olfactory senses:

Lourdes could not see but she smelled vividly as if her senses had concentrated on this alone. [...] She smelled his face on his wedding day, his tears when his son drowned at the park. She smelled his rotting leg in Africa, where it would be blown off his body on a moonless savanna night. She smelled him when he was old and unbathed and the flies blackened his eyes. (71-72)

The narrative utilizes a magical form of communication—she comes to know intimate details of the soldier’s past and future by smelling him—to signify strong, if traumatizing, bonds. Besides

being fantastical, the content of the knowledge Lourdes acquires itself suggests a very close, if awful, relationship. Typically, such personal and intricate knowledge about another individual is held only by someone closely-knit to that person. The implication here, then, is that when the soldier rapes Lourdes, he generates a violent and unwanted, yet nevertheless profoundly strong link between them, and so reflects the usage of magic as amplifying the attachment. At the same time, magic is also enacting a conduit of their awful bond, as the information she preternaturally intuits enhances that tie.

While all of the instances of the magical braid followed thus far have involved persons within a shared familial group—father/daughter, grandmother/granddaughter, and husband/wife—and in this way reference the family nexus, this situation with Lourdes and the soldier diverges from the others in this respect. To recall Laing and Esterton’s definition which this chapter has been following, the family nexus involves “that multiplicity of persons drawn from the kinship group, and from others who, though not linked by kinship ties, are regarded as members of the family. The relationships of persons in a nexus are characterized by enduring and intensive face-to-face reciprocal influence on each other’s experience and behavior” (21). The soldier is outside the del Pino family nexus insofar as he does not fit within the specified temporal dimensions of this denotation: Lourdes and the soldier do not maintain “enduring and intensive face-to-face” interaction. Nevertheless, the impact of their relationship does indeed fulfill the definition. The soldier has a deep “influence” on Lourdes’ “experience and behavior,” though the reader is unaware of any “reciprocal” impact Lourdes has on him. Still, the bearing that this one-time traumatic encounter has on Lourdes might be seen as *Dreaming*’s expanding Laing and Esterton’s parameters to include people with whom characters only intersect fleetingly. Moreover, this modification aligns with both Laing’s and *Dreaming*’s emphasis on experience,

the way a single encounter can leave a permanent impression. The soldier's act binds Lourdes to him, horribly so. This crime haunts her memory throughout the duration of the novel and, one imagines, for the rest of her life.

In addition to Lourdes' magical acquisition of knowledge during the perpetration, communication is woven into this painful event in a secondary, if not phenomenal, way: "When he finished, the soldier lifted the knife and began to scratch at Lourdes's belly with great concentration. A primeval scraping. Crimson hieroglyphics. Not until later [...] did Lourdes try to read what he had carved. But it was illegible" (72). The narrative frames this violent act in terms of unreadable communication, a detail which points to the nature of trauma on its victims, its indecipherability. It is unreadable, without sense. Nevertheless, this disturbing event now becomes a permanent inscription on Lourdes' physical body as well as her mind.²⁴

The family's role, particularly among the women, in carrying each other's stories could offer a salve to Lourdes' traumatic past. Like Celia, she does not have to be orphaned with the burden of carrying her knowledge alone, but sadly Lourdes rejects (or is incapable of benefiting from) this opportunity. Part of her inability to communicate this event points to trauma's ineffability; however, Lourdes' isolation in this instance is characteristic of her severing herself from her family, relationally and geographically. Lourdes is disconnected from the maternal bloodline on both sides, alienated from mother, sister, and daughter, so she bears these traumatic memories in isolation. Pilar is unaware of her mother's miscarriage and rape, as is clear when Pilar narrates: "When I was a kid, Mom slept in air thin and nervous as a magnetic field, attracting small disturbances. She tossed and turned all night, as if she were wrestling ghosts in her dreams. Sometimes she'd wake up crying, clutching her stomach and moaning from deep inside a place I couldn't understand" (221). While Lourdes is very close to her father, she has never told him

about her rape, though due to some kind of near-magical intuition, he is secretly aware of it. In his final visitation, he discloses this: “I know about the soldier, Lourdes. I’ve known all these years” (196). Nevertheless, the narrative suggests the significance of the maternal bloodline through a negative example here, through the way Lourdes’ suffers for want of connection to it.

The third and final instance of traumatically induced magic has Pilar at its center. This is the most complex of the examples traced thus far, and it brings together many significant thematic threads that have been woven throughout the narrative. Like the preceding example with Lourdes, this scenario both resembles the narrative’s other magical moments and departs from them in telling, generative ways. Nevertheless, the tri-part pattern established in the previous instances helps to unlock the richness of meaning embedded within this event. Coming home from the *botánica* at night, Pilar is assaulted in Morningside Park:

Three boys surrounded me suddenly in the park, locking me between their bodies. [...] They can’t be more than eleven years old. The tallest one presses a blade to my throat. [...] They pull off my sweater and carefully unbutton my blouse. With the knife still at my throat, they take turns suckling my breasts. They’re children, I tell myself, trying to contain my fear. (201-02)

Her attack immediately evokes resonances with her mother’s previous assault, particularly in its sexual nature and the presence of the knife. Also evoking Lourdes’ experience, Pilar’s attack is connected to a magical type of communication. She gains through this violating crime an extrasensory ability through which she acquires pieces of information about others: “Since that day in Morningside Park, I can hear fragments of people’s thoughts, glimpse scraps of their future. It’s nothing I can control. The perceptions come without warnings or explanations, erratic as lightening” (216). What differs between Lourdes’ and Pilar’s experiences is that while Lourdes’ supernatural knowledge was about her perpetrator, Pilar does not seem to have the same insight into her attackers. Her awareness involves numerous other people from both the

past and future, presented in a cluster in the narrative. Also different, Pilar's ability arises subsequent to her attack and remains with her.

One of the first clear hints as to the import of Pilar's violently-induced clairvoyance comes in her describing this ability as "erratic as lightning," a simile that invokes Changó, god of lightning. Her attack occurs just after the *santero* at the *botánica* has identified her as a daughter of Changó. In this way, the narrative signals that Pilar's magical ability is to be affiliated with Cuba in its syncretic religion, *Santería*. An examination of the content of her extrasensory perception affirms and brings texture to this link. In the first moment in the string of intuitions the narrative lists, Pilar realizes "there's a shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico filled with ingots and doubloons. Men in wet suits will find the galleon three years from now. They will celebrate with champagne and murder." The ingots and doubloons on this sunken ship reveal that the vessel must date from the times of Spanish conquest, though its ruins will not be discovered until 1983 in a corrupt sequence of events. The second and third moments of Pilar's clairvoyance deal with deadly, failed attempts at immigration. One centers around a family from Cárdenas who die before arriving safely to Florida: "They stole a boat from a fisherman. It collapsed in the current early this morning" (216-17). The other involves a Haitian family who die in the Tropic of Cancer. There are two instances when Pilar has flashes of knowledge about Celia, one of which foretells Celia's suggested suicide in Santa Teresa del Mar. Finally, Pilar has a vision about the colonial past: "I wonder about the voyages to old colonies. Ocean liners gliding toward Africa and India. The women on board wore black elbow-length gloves. They drank from porcelain teacups, longed for moist earth to eat. They lingered with their impulses against the railings" (219). Pilar's various moments of magical insight are varied, encompassing an expanse of geography and subjects, but can be organized around the pivotal point of the Caribbean and,

even more specifically, Cuba.²⁵ Her knowledge includes people, places, and events which combined represent a significant portion of Caribbean history: the Spanish, colonization, Cuba, Haiti, immigrants, the US, parallel colonies in Africa and India, slavery, and, more intimately, her grandmother.

Because in the tri-part pattern employed by the narrative magical communication points to strong bonds, Pilar's supernatural knowledge suggests the way she is deeply interconnected with Cuba/ns and the Caribbean more generally. The contrast between Pilar's and Lourdes' attacks also points to this, for while Lourdes' magical knowledge is about the soldier and signals her tie to him, Pilar's intuition shifts from her attackers to this varied population. Pilar's supernatural insight connects her to them, not to the violent, American boys. The magical link between Pilar and Cuba is echoed in other ways, so that the narrative reinforces this reading of Pilar's clairvoyance. On her return visit she describes: "I've started dreaming in Spanish, which has never happened before. I wake up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible. There's a magic here working its way through my veins" (235).

However, this evokes an additional way that Pilar's example proves more intricate than the previous examples. As we have seen, the pattern of the magical braid involves magical communication among individuals who share a thick bond, and it is through this three-part weave that the narrative explores the impact of the family nexus on individuals. While a significant aspect of Pilar's magical capacity is its pointing to her ties to Cuba and the Caribbean, I am suggesting, and it becomes important in this respect that her visions are about specific people, these points of attachment do not comprise close interpersonal attachments. Where, then, is the thread of the interpersonal relationship? This aspect is hinted at in the way the narrative

frames Pilar's attack in terms of the maternal. Her perpetrators are young boys who "suckle" her breasts, and it is this event, furthermore, which catapults her magical ability that fastens her to Caribbean peoples and history. In casting Pilar as a mother figure, the narrative suggests that she has succeeded Celia in the narrative's role of Cuban matriarch. It is through her intimate connection to her *abuela*, in other words, through which Pilar becomes attached to Cuba/ns and the Caribbean.

Celia is characterized by maternal qualities. In addition to her central role in the del Pino family, she has incorporated her motherly characteristics into her volunteer efforts for the Revolution, serving as a judge over family disputes and caring for wayward Cuban teenagers caught up in the courts. García accentuates Celia's matriarchal role when she describes her as "the backbone and the strength of the novel. She is the spiritual guide" ("...And There" 108). As the mother figure of the del Pino family, Celia is caught up in the trajectories of her children's lives, carrying with them the weight of their unfolding issues, as is seen in her magical ability to perceive when Felicia tried to commit suicide and to imbibe Javier's tumor. This is echoed in Pilar, who similarly bears the knowledge of the trajectories of those who traverse this geographical expanse, the Caribbean. That this legacy is passed from Celia to Pilar again emphasizes that, like Herminia's role in Felicia's becoming a *santera* and Celia and Jorge's influence on Lourdes' Americanism, large-level attachments are forged through smaller levels. Pilar's tethering to Caribbean people and history does not form in a vacuum, but is established through her tie to her Abuela Celia.

Belonging to People

When Pilar is thirteen, she attempts to run away from Brooklyn to Cuba, to return to the place where she was born and where her beloved grandmother still resides. Fraught with questions of

her place in the world, she believes: “If I could only see Abuela Celia again, I’d know where I belonged” (58). Here, Pilar evokes belonging as both locational (where?) and relational (to whom?), but it is the latter that informs the former. Her sense of belonging significantly involves not merely a geographical locus, but a person, Abuela Celia. The notion that one finds a sense of belonging through one’s family nexus, the positive outcome of *Dreaming*’s strategy of belonging, intimates that belonging’s object is, first and foremost, people, as opposed to place, the rendering of belonging that often accompanies exile narratives.

This is a concept García develops in her subsequent novel *Monkey Hunting*. Contemplating his son, Lorenzo, who has just returned to Cuba after traveling through China for twelve years, Chen Pan thinks to himself: “Now where could he call home?” Chen Pan wonders: “Perhaps home was in the blood of his grandsons as it traveled through their flesh” (191-92). In this novel, then, home, or belonging, and family become explicitly linked. Home is an issue for Lorenzo because of his complex heritage. Lorenzo was born in Cuba of a mulatto mother (Lucrecia) and Chinese father (Chen Pan), and has spent many years away. The double and even triple hyphenations that characterize García’s characters, as well as their shifting homes, suggest why García extends the idea of belonging to people rather than to particular, and singular, geo-political territories.

Alternatives to geo-political belonging is an issue also explored by Rushdie, an author who, like García, is concerned at a personal and theoretical level with issues emerging from translocation. He argues that for immigrants belonging to place has necessarily been exchanged for other forms of attachments: “The effect of mass migration has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things” (124). García adds to this list of alternatives (ideas and memories)

that of people. One “roots” one’s self in the soil of one’s loved ones. Though, in her first novel, *Dreaming*, the emphasis on belonging through family is an issue that refuses to be limited to political exiles or characters who have for one reason or another relocated. The role of the family nexus is as crucial for Celia, who never leaves Cuba, as it is for her granddaughter Pilar, who has grown up in New York. This is a necessary maneuver in *Dreaming* because of the way the narrative relies upon a destabilization of the political and domestic domains in order to emphasize the influence of the family on its individual members. In other words, its defying of expectations (what an exile novel would posit about belonging) allows the narrative to foreground its strategy of belonging, the family nexus.

Chapter Four

Universal Cosmopolitanism in Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence*

*Outside the whale there is a genuine need for [...] books that draw
new and better maps of reality.*

“For God’s Sake, Open the Universe a Little More!” – Salman Rushdie¹

Salman Rushdie’s most recent novel, *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), involves two predominant and dovetailing narratives, both of which occur during roughly the late fifteenth to late sixteenth centuries. The novel opens with the arrival of a mysterious, blond-haired visitor to Sikri, the home of the Mughal emperor, Akbar the Great. This man of many names—Uccello di Firenze, the Mogor dell’Amore, Niccolò Antonio Vespucci—is on a dangerous mission to tell the emperor a secret which will either cost him his life or secure his fortune. The plot centering around Vespucci and Akbar is perpetuated by the former’s story-telling ability, so that reminiscent of Scheherazade he staves off potential execution by stringing together his marvelous tales. One of the most significant of these stories composes *Enchantress*’s second plot featuring the novel’s namesake, the enchantress Angelica, whom the reader later discovers is also Akbar’s deceased great-aunt, Qara Kōz. Two generations prior to Vespucci’s arrival at Akbar’s court, this Mughal princess was forced to leave her home after having been handed over by her brother to another ruler as a spoil of war. This begins a chain of events, leading to her traveling West after having fallen in love with an Ottoman janissary, Argalia. At the end of *Enchantress*, these two narratives converge when Qara Kōz magically returns home to Akbar.

As this intertwining of the historical and the marvelous suggests, with *Enchantress* Rushdie returns again to what seems to be his storytelling mode of choice, magical realism. As with Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (analyzed in chapter two) and Cristina García’s *Dreaming in Cuban* (chapter three), *Enchantress* harnesses magical realism’s aesthetic tools to present a strategy of

belonging, or a depiction of how characters do and/or should derive senses of place, identity, and meaning. This usage of the mode compares to a narrative mapping of the globe, depicting not topography, elevation, or the continents, but who belongs with whom and why. Whereas *Famished* employs the supernatural to construct a vernacular humanism, wherein birth determines characters' first attachments, the care of which allows them to mature into the universal human fraternity and *Dreaming* emphasizes the inescapable bonds of the family nexus, *Enchantress* plots yet a different strategy of belonging, one which is constructed through a complex layering.

Enchantress's proliferating stories imply that the cosmopolitan cartography of Rushdie's narrative might similarly be considered in terms of multiplicity. Indeed, we can imagine *Enchantress*'s strategy of belonging being plotted through a palimpsestic map composed of three layers. Each layer grafts a different response to the question of belonging, and each bears upon the strata surrounding it so that the layers inform and refute each other. Yet, the narrative does not leave its strategy of belonging in a state of multiple possibilities. When *Enchantress*'s map is viewed as a composite whole, a shape emerges which bears resemblance to universal cosmopolitanism, a locus within the cosmopolitan theoretical spectrum most closely associated with Martha Nussbaum. This strategy plots an opposition between belonging through communities of descent and a kind of (anti)belonging through exile, privileging the latter. It contrasts sharply in this way from both Okri's and García's novels, both of which stress the import of inherited attachments.

In its fictional rendition of this cosmopolitan theoretical position, *Enchantress* encompasses a series of tensions which this chapter seeks to address: the particular and the universal; difference and sameness; the endorsement of exile and its impossibility; the new cosmopolitanism and

universal cosmopolitanism; East and West.² Ultimately, the narrative's dramatization of universal cosmopolitanism proves structurally and ideologically inconsistent, suggesting the inadequacy of this means of being in the world, for if fictional flesh cannot sustain it one has little hope for what it offers actual people. Its most glaring issue is the polarity the narrative establishes between universalist exile and particularism, for this conflict ultimately recreates the very kind of us/them dichotomy which *Enchantress*'s theme of a common human race seeks to undo.

The narrative's universalist cosmopolitan strategy, laid out in the first half of this chapter, is subsequently situated within key portions of Rushdie's existing corpus, as I draw attention to in the second half of the chapter. Here, it becomes apparent that *Enchantress* signifies a shift in Rushdie's former cosmopolitan and postcolonial position, that defined by hybridity; in his continued battle against restricted identity and belonging; and, finally, in his employment of magical realism. Homi Bhabha, Timothy Brennan, and Craig Calhoun have praised Rushdie as an exemplar of hybridity. However, while from one angle *Enchantress*'s universal cosmopolitanism continues the project with which he has developed hybridity to engage, purist conceptions of belonging and identity, from another it is antithetical to it, for where hybridity depended on cultural difference for mixture, *Enchantress* contends for the basic similitude underlying all cultures and individuals. This raises questions concerning Rushdie's now adapted postcolonial methodology. It also complicates his established magical realist aesthetics, as a mode well situated to express the concerns, experiences, and politics of postcolonial peoples, particularly that of immigrants.

Where *Enchantress*'s universal cosmopolitanism is ideologically fraught, though, the novel's nuanced treatment of magical realism is aesthetically stimulating and innovative. Rushdie

employs the formal techniques of the mode in an ideologically blasphemous way, utilizing narrative magic not to demonstrate the incommensurable components which represent postcolonial experience or to subvert Western ideologies, but to bridge East and West, a function embodied in his magical enchantress, Qara Kőz.

Layer One: Particularism

Let us consider the first layer of *Enchantress*'s cosmopolitan map as illustrating a particularist strategy of belonging, that defined by "exclusive attachment or devotion to one's own nation, party, sect, etc." (*Oxford*). This domain is densely populated due to its being inhabited by the majority of characters in the narrative, those from both sides of the globe's longitudinally divided hemispheres, East and West, all of whom view identity and belonging as something predominantly (pre)determined by birth. This situation renders social solidarity atomized, consisting of countless subdivisions defined by criteria such as city-states and religious sects. Thus, if one were to imagine the global cartography, or visual rendition, of this first layer in isolation, that person might envision a map comprised of innumerable small circles, most of which do not overlap, except at their edges in conflict. As this intimates, the strategy of belonging grafted in this first layer is not a benign form of affiliation, but includes a dangerous chauvinism and xenophobia.

The Mughal Emperor's favorite queen, Jodha, is one denizen of this initial domain, and an especially intriguing one as she reflects the particularist strategy of belonging in her magical characterization. Akbar imagined Jodha into being, as if he were a god able to create *ex nihilo*. Resulting from this marvelous means of her genesis, Jodha literally cannot survive outside her home, the palace, and away from Akbar, the source from which she derives her existence: "If she left the palaces, or so she had always suspected, the spell would be broken and she would cease

to exist” (49). Jodha’s character represents a variant of the “verbal magic” Wendy Faris describes, wherein magical realism “makes the verbal real” (*Ordinary* 114). Unable to stray too far from her points of origin, Akbar and the palace, Jodha enfleshes in her magical characterization the centripetal form of belonging depicted in the first layer. This is clear in the fact that Jodha’s physical limitation is compatible with her views: “[...] she had no desire to leave. [...] This was her little universe” (49). Johdabai’s restricted “universe,” or range of movement, reflects her restricted perspective of the world and its inhabitants, as seen in her opinion on travel:

Travel was pointless. It removed you from the place in which you had a meaning, and to which you gave meaning in return by dedicating your life to it, and it spirited you away into fairylands where you were, and looked, frankly absurd.

Yes: this place, Sikri, was a fairyland to [foreigners] just as their England and Portugal, their Holland and France, were beyond her ability to comprehend. The world was not all one thing. (48)

Jodha’s marvelous nature exhibits a point of consistency among *Enchantress* and the other two novels considered in this study, *Famished* and *Dreaming*: Rushdie’s, Okri’s, and García’s uses of magic are intimately bound up with the strategies of belonging their narratives construct.

Though, as will be seen, Jodha’s is presented in order to be criticized.

Jodha’s inner monologue on travel encompasses several key aspects of the particularism represented in the first layer. To begin, one’s origins and meaning are inextricably wed. Characters here tend to view the attachments into which they are born as providing them with all the significance they need. Conversely, outside one’s home, a person becomes absurd (a theme which will reappear in this chapter), which suggests why “travel was pointless.” Travel is a useless exercise, Jodha suggests, because one is incapable of signifying meaning outside one’s home, a view of the world that imagines people groups as essentially different, separated from one another by an impenetrable wall. This boundary divides insiders from outsiders, particularly

East(erners) from West(erners), as Jodha signals when contrasting Sikri with the nations of Western Europe (England, Portugal, Holland, and France). This hemispheric division is a central issue in *Enchantress*'s thematics and one which the other layers of its cosmopolitan map work to unsettle.

If East and West is the predominant division addressed, though, it is not the only one. As the narrative shows, even within the same city, origin-based segregation abounds. For example, in Sikri the inhabitants live in religious and ethnic enclaves: "To the east was the Hindu colony and beyond that, curling around the city walls, the Persian quarter, and beyond that the region of the Turanis and beyond that, in the vicinity of the giant gate of the Friday Mosque, the home of those Muslims who were Indian born" (28-29). Akbar's debate chamber, The Tent of the New Worship, is ideologically separated between the Water Drinkers and Wine Lovers, so that the meetings held there are typically fruitless, composed of name slinging ("Fat sycophant!" – "Tedious termite!") and hostile arguments (80). On the other half of the globe, Florence is torn between the Medicis and opposing Catholic sects, which results in cyclical mass hangings and burnings of popes and bishops (133, 148). This depiction gives credence to Nussbaum's complaint that constituting "self-definition by a morally irrelevant characteristic" of some particular group smaller than humanity opens the door for continual subdivisions in group loyalties ("Patriotism" 5).

In this first layer, not only does one derive meaning solely from one's origins, but reciprocation is owed. Having obtained the gift of identity and meaning from the attachments into which they were born, characters are to respond to this by giving their loyalty in return. This expectation is exemplified in the ritual of infant baptism which Ago undergoes: "Long ago in the octagonal gloom of the Battistero di San Giovanni he had been baptized twice, as was

customary, once as a Christian and again as a Florentine, and to an irreligious bastard like Ago it was the second baptism that counted. The city was his religion, a world as perfect as any heaven” (145). Before Ago has a chance to consider for himself to whom he will give his loyalty, he is baptized into the religio-political attachments of his birth. Nevertheless, upon becoming an adult Ago does not question the legitimacy of this obligatory loyalty, but uncritically upholds it, elevating his devotion to Florence to that of religious fervor. That this was the “customary” practice indicates the pervasiveness of this un-consented, unconsidered method of belonging. Furthermore, the integration of religious ceremony with patriotic loyalty demonstrates the seriousness this attachment is to represent for the baptized person, as it is a consecrated pact. Even if Ago disregards the religious component, this scenario signals the dangerous bolstering of political authority with religious authority, an issue Rushdie has also censured in other writings, such as in *Shame* and “In God We Trust.”³

Inherited attachments, ritualized for Florentines, predetermines who are one’s friends and who are one’s foes. This is illustrated in the conversation that transpires among the three boyhood companions, Argalia, Ago, and Machia, when Argalia proclaims to the other two his decision to become a mercenary soldier:

The greatest remaining mercenary fighter, according to Argalia, was Andrea Doria, leader of the Band of Gold, who just then were busy with the liberation of Genoa from French control. “But you are Florentine, and we are allied with the French,” Ago cried [...]. “When you are a mercenary,” Argalia said, [...] “the allegiances of your birth go by the board.” (139)

The mercenary soldier signals a gross betrayal of the sacralized particularist strategy of belonging because the soldier simply fights on the side of those paying, or renting, his services. This occupation was thus going to cause Argalia to defy “the allegiances of [his] birth.”

As this discussion of allies and enemies suggestively calls to mind, the particularism of the first layer often goes beyond viewing outsiders as simply incomprehensible and travel distasteful. Characters' chauvinism, their excessive preference for their own, typically goes hand in hand with xenophobia, a derogatory view of outsiders, a dangerous combination. In *Enchantress*, those outside one's borders are suspect because they are seen to potentially undermine the values and ways of life within a particular enclave. This outlook poses a very real threat to Vespucci while he is in Sikri. Upon his arrival, he is repeatedly referred to as a "rogue," a "charlatan" (71), and a "foreign scoundrel" (81). Badauni, the Muslim cleric, suspects Vespucci as being a part of "a hedonistic conspiracy to weaken the people's moral fiber and to erode the moral authority of the One True God" (200-01). Conversely, when Qara Kōz and her servant, the Mirror, arrive with Argalia's retinue in Percussina, Italy, Machiavelli's wife describes the women as "queen demonesses" and "the witches who have come to destroy our happy Florentine way of life" (243, 250). In the subsequent city to which Qara Kōz travels, Florence, she must employ her full powers of enchantment in order to "smooth her entry into what might otherwise have been hostile surroundings," her foreignness always posing a threat to her safety (272).

Enchantress suggests that those who derive belonging through communities of descent tend towards the slippery slope of dangerous and violent territorialism. After Argalia follows through with his plan of becoming a mercenary fighter, he ends up traveling to the other side of the world from Italy, achieving the revered rank of Ottoman janissary, or soldier. When his friend Machia, Rushdie's fictional rendering of the historical Niccolò Machiavelli, discovers this, it represents to him a revolting betrayal of the loyalties Argalia is expected to uphold:

[Machia] lay down [...] and tried to picture Nino Argalia as an Oriental pasha fanned by bare-chested Nubian eunuchs and beset by harem lovelies. Feelings of revulsion arose in

him at the image of this renegade, a Christian converting to Islam, enjoying the fleshpots of Constantinople, the new Konstantiniyye or Stamboul of the Turks, or praying in the Janissaries' mosque, or walking without care by the fallen, broken statue of the emperor Justinian, and reveling in the growing power of the enemies of the West. Such a treasonous transformation might impress a good-natured innocent like Ago Vespucci [...] but to Niccolò's mind it broke the bonds of their friendship, and should they ever meet face to face they would do so as foes, for Argalia's defection was a crime against deeper truths, the eternal verities of power and kinship that drove the history of men. He had turned against his own kind and a tribe was never lenient with such men. (186-87)

Machia's "feelings of revulsion" evince an attitude towards outsiders that pushes beyond Jodha's cultural relativism into the realm of aggression and violence. This is signaled by the militant language Machia employs: "renegade," "power," "enemies," "treasonous," broken bonds, "foes," "defection," "crime," and finally the implicit threat about one's own not being "lenient with such men."

The way Machia navigates this situation with Argalia is suggestive in what it reveals about the narrative's attitude towards this layer's strategy of belonging. Upon receiving the news about Argalia, Machia is confronted by conflicting loyalties, solidarity to his boyhood friend and solidarity to his tribe.⁴ These loyalties conflict because of Machia's own implicit imagined map of social solidarity, which is organized by necessarily oppositional groups. The world for him is reductively composed of two circles: those of kinship and those of enemies. To enter the latter is to forsake the former, as he perceives Argalia to have done. Clearly, allegiance to "the eternal verities of power and kinship" constitutes Machia's supreme value, which explains why he chooses tribe over friend.

One might question Machia's decision, though, not necessarily in terms of why he made the selection he did, though that certainly and importantly reflects negatively on Machia's strategy of belonging, but why he must decide between the two to begin with. Why does Rushdie construct this dichotomy between attachments to traditional communities of descent and fellow individual

instead of depicting a scenario wherein Machia can integrate both? This is not the only instance in the narrative this decision is forced, either. Argalia makes the reverse choice when the Florentine mob is rallying to acquire Qara Kōz (presumably to burn her to death) because they believe her to be a witch who put a curse on their Duke. When Argalia rushes in to help her, someone from the mob presses him: “Who do you serve, *condottiere*, the people or your own lust? Do you serve the city and its hexed Duke, or are you in thrall to the hag who hexed him?” The opposite of Machiavelli, Argalia chooses Qara Kōz. Still, the decision forced upon him is the same. Either he supports his geo-political community and betrays another individual, Qara Kōz, or he becomes an enemy. The assimilation of multiple attachments is not an option.

On one hand, Machia’s and Argalia’s choices most certainly reflect occurrences in the extratextual world wherein people are pressured to choose between insiders and outsiders. On the other hand, though, these situations both represent and help to construct a central dichotomy the narrative forges between two strategies of belonging: a morally questionable particularism and a morally superior form of exile, described later in the third layer, wherein a few exceptional characters try to extract themselves from their communities of descent and avoid the pitfalls practiced here. The first layer of *Enchantress*’s cosmopolitan map forms the beginning point of this opposition in its negative depiction of the particularist strategy of belonging and its seemingly inevitable ghastly conclusions.

This raises a final aspect established in this first layer of the narrative’s cosmopolitan map. Machia’s dubious decision, along with the slide into dangerous attitudes traced among these characters, demonstrates that *Enchantress*’s depiction of this strategy is not merely descriptive, impartially depicting how many characters do belong in the world, but it also carries a prescriptive element, recommending how characters should not belong in the world. This moral

component of the narrative's cosmopolitanism will become more pronounced when the additional two layers are drawn into tension with this first one.

Layer Two: Doubling

A second layer of narrative cartography can be assembled. This is composed not of a particular (or particularist) strategy of belonging, as in the first stratum, but of a transhemispheric and transgenerational view of characters. This comprehensive perspective is made possible for the reader by *Enchantress*'s complex narration as well as its traveling protagonists. The novel, it will be recalled, is predominantly composed of two interconnected plots, both of which involve travelers who journey across the two halves of the globe—Argalia journeys West to East and back again; Qara Kōz from East to West and back again; and Vespucci makes his way from *Mundus Novus*, the New World, to Sikri. Because of the vast story-space covered by the novel's primary two plots, the reader gains a panoramic view of civilizations and characters.

What the reader witnesses in this expanse is a profusion of echoes, mirrorings, and doubles, which range from the purely imaginative to those drawn from historical reality. While characters' continual criss-crossing between East and West nudges readers to consider the hemispheres in an inclusive and comparative framework, the literary trope of replication guides them to a specific conclusion, the profound similarity among characters, events, ideas, and civilizations across the globe. Justin Neuman also takes note of this effect in his review of the novel: "[...] the striking thing about the way Rushdie portrays Sikri and Florence and the characters who inhabit them is how fundamentally similar they are in attitude, bodily comportment, belief, and ethos" (677). This evidently reflects Rushdie's own research epiphany, for in an interview with Robert Siegel: "Rushdie says the great discovery he had while writing

the book was he began to find ‘mirrorings and echoes’ that showed the similarities between the two civilizations” (“Rushdie’s”).⁵

Probably the most explicit example of this employment of repetition in *Enchantress* is the twice proclaimed statement: “’*This may be the curse of the human race, [...] not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike*” (137).⁶ The first time this is spoken it is done so by Vespucci to his interlocutor Akbar, who will later echo it. The context in which the declaration is enunciated each time illuminates its meaning and function within the narrative. When Vespucci makes this claim, he is commenting on the striking similarity among East and West which he is able to recognize after having arrived in the East from *Mundus Novus*, the New World. Specifically, he is responding to the realization that a series of events and people in Florence, Italy, echo events and people in Sikri, India. The situation deals with “the first enchantress of Florence,” Simonetta, a Florentine woman whose beauty was unparalleled. The plot of *The Enchantress of Florence* follows not Simonetta, though, but the second, Qara Kōz, a princess of the Mughal empire, so that the title of the novel itself enacts an East/West character doubling. Both of these women had been painted by artists from their homelands, and in both instances the painters became undone by their portraits, hopelessly enchanted by their subjects. In this one comment, then, Vespucci is referencing proliferating parallels between the hemispheres.

Besides the dual enchantresses of Florence, another pair of East/West character doubles is Queen Elizabeth and the Emperor Akbar:

[...] the faraway redhead queen was nothing less than the Western mirror of the emperor himself, she was Akbar in female form, and he, the Shahanshah, the king of kings, could be said to be an Eastern Elizabeth, mustachioed, non-virginal, but in the essence of their greatness they were the same. (69)

Machia(velli) functions as a double of Akbar in their similar questioning of the relationship between governance and power.⁷ Akbar ponders: “We conclude, therefore, that the love of the people is fickle. But what follows from that conclusion? Should we become a cruel tyrant? [...] Does only fear endure?” (196). Machia later echoes this: “The love of the people was fickle and inconstant and to pursue such a love was folly. There was no love. There was only power” (240). At another moment, Akbar makes a statement contrasting power and glory which is quoted directly from the historical Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, as Rushdie, tongue in cheek, signals to the reader when Vespucci replies: “Niccolò Machiavelli of Florence could not have said it better” (211).

As this shows, Rushdie employs intertextuality to generate multi-dimensional instances of East/West doubling, interconnecting the hemispheres through the weaving of the imaginative and the historical. In another example, Akbar’s creation of his beloved Queen Jodha is a recurrence, the narrative signals, of the Greek Pygmalion myth (48), just as the common ability of Italians Vespucci and Argalia to stave off death through storytelling evokes the Arabic *The Thousand and One Nights* (168).

In addition to character doubling and intertextuality, the narrative depicts the mirroring of ideas and events between East and West, as the instances of the two enchantresses and Akbar’s and Machia’s views of rulership have already suggested. Another example is the discovery of the heliocentric configuration of the solar system. In a satirical moment, this revolutionary idea is shown to have had a tardy arrival in the West:

[Vespucci] told the emperor [Akbar] about the new, heliocentric model of the universe, speaking in a low voice, because it was a concept which could still get a man burned at the stake for heresy back home. [...]

Akbar laughed. “This has been known for hundreds of years,” he said. (154-55)

Besides this astronomical (un)discovery, humanism and the sovereignty of the individual are being contemplated in both places.

The two civilizations themselves are compared. Both Europe and the Ottoman empire are undergoing a renaissance at the time the narrative is set. More sensationally, Sikri reflects Florence in its carnal indulgence, as Neuman notes: “[...] an important site of convergence between Medici Florence and Akbar’s Sikri [...] is an ethos of decadence, sexual licentiousness, and a thriving public culture of prostitution” (679).⁸ Akbar’s court overflows with opium, wine, and sex, just as Florence, when not being suppressed by religious leaders, is depicted as home to a fantasy of free love. “Wipe your eyes and unbutton your pants,” Ago hears one man yelling through the streets after the puritanical four-year reign of the Cult of the Weepers had ended so that “the true nature of that city of lubricious sensualists reasserted itself” (149, 158).

The structure of the narrative itself composes an East/West mirroring as it is a composite of two plots which roughly divide the novel between Vespucci and Akbar in Sikri and Qara Kız and Argalia in Florence, as book publishers have noticed and incorporated into the production of the novel. In the 2008 Jonathan Cape publication of *Enchantress*, the text is situated between, on one inside cover, a two-page spread of an illustration of Sikri and, on the other, one of Florence.⁹ Rushdie reports another way that the narrative functions as an East/West double. After having started his novel, (Indian born) Rushdie learns that Italian Lodovico Ariosto had in the early sixteenth century already created a similar plot in his narrative poem, “Orlando Furioso.” In Rushdie’s words, Ariosto’s poem centers around “an Indian princess showing up in Europe and creating havoc, and being accused of being a witch, an enchantress” (“Authors”).

As this last instance implies, the use of doubling motifs does not only level East(erners) and West(erners), but is also frequently employed to link another set of poles, that of past and

present, interconnecting characters within the same hemispheric location across time.¹⁰ Qara Kōz's servant and lover is nicknamed the Mirror because of her strong resemblance to Qara Kōz. This replication is further accentuated because the Mirror repeats what Qara Kōz says. Several generations later, a similar situation recurs when Queen Hamida Bano, Akbar's mother, has a maidservant named Bibi Fatima who also echoes the Queen. In a few other examples, the phrase "survival of the fittest" is presented in the narrative as Machiavelli's idea, and this at a time hundreds of years before Darwin (170). Following in the footsteps of his cousin, Amerigo Vespucci, Ago later travels to *Mundus Novus* (332).

The accumulation of all of these duplicating events, characters, and ideas functions to affirm Vespucci's statement: they demonstrate a profound resemblance among "the human race," Easterners and Westerners, then and now. This similitude, furthermore, is a condition that renders the favoritism of the first layer not only morally suspect, but also logically unsound.

When Akbar repeats Vespucci's assertion about the "human race," he both confirms the meaning of sameness established in its first utterance and builds upon it, elucidating the other significant aspect of this statement, why the human race's correspondence is a curse. In this narrative moment, Akbar has been musing over the differences between a type of humanism he has been pondering throughout the novel—"human beings and not gods were the masters of human destinies"—and the foolishness of Western humanists, who still "required divine sanction to support their case in this matter": "How confused they were [...] and how much they thought of themselves. He was the ruler of the frontierless universe and he saw more clearly than they." Immediately following this thought, though, Akbar changes his prideful sentiments: "No, he corrected himself, he did not, and was indulging in mere bigotry if he asserted it. Mogor had

been right. *The curse of the human race is not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike*” (309-11).

When Akbar makes this declaration, he is agreeing with Vespucci, and thereby corroborates the statement’s content. He also affirms it on the level of characterization. Since a significant end to which this manifesto is put is a leveling of East(erners) and West(erners), this echoing revelation between Akbar and Vespucci performs its meaning, a conjoining of what may appear to be two distinct types of humankind—Easterner and Westerner—into a point of sameness, as this moment of repetition enacts. Finally, Akbar’s utterance adds texture to Vespucci’s assertion: humankind is alike in that they are commonly flawed. In this sense of human similitude, Akbar’s realization provides yet another point of echoing (and, thus, affirmation), for this notion has already been voiced by Qara Köz, who much earlier in time asserted: “‘There is no particular wisdom in the East [...]. All human beings are foolish to the same degree’” (286).

In the moment in which Akbar has this epiphany he is similarly considering how both Eastern and Western intellectuals suffer from a metaphorical near-sightedness, or limited insight. This is not merely an intellectual issue, though. Akbar accuses Italians of inflated egos, yet in the very moment he is charging them with this, he himself is evincing the same fault. This blind hypocrisy, the way that Akbar would, in his pride, condemn the pride of his others, begins to explain why human sameness is referred to as a “curse”: it is characters’ common moral imperfections that generates discord.

This gets to a conundrum that is at the heart of the narrative’s palimpsestic map, its depiction of tragic irony: it is the similar propensity to find belonging through seemingly incompatible enclaves that ensures the unnecessary atomization of, and continued conflict among, humankind. This irony is structured through the juxtaposition of the narrative’s first and second layers. The

second layer, which is composed of repetition to demonstrate a similar (flawed) humanity, rubs against the first, that which depicts a strategy of belonging based on a belief in the fundamental disparity among the human race defined by natal ties. In other words, though these divisions are unwarranted (as humanity is actually basically the same, which means there is no essential difference to protect), because circumscription is a shared flaw, they will tragically continue.

As with the temporal connections already described, the curse of the human race demonstrates not only a dismal similarity among East and West, but also among people within a single community. The people of Florence, that tie of kinship Machia so deeply reveres and for which he severs his friendship with Argalia, later turn on him:

The people whom [Machia] had served as a true republican, as secretary of the Second Chancery, traveling diplomat and founder of the Florentine militia, had betrayed him. [...] After fourteen years of loyal service the people had shown that they did not care about loyalty. [...] They had allowed il Machia to be taken down into the underground bowels of the city where the torturers waited. (239)

This profound betrayal leads even Machia to contemplate, if only for a moment, the similarity among a defective human race: “Perhaps this was what all people were like, everywhere” (239).

Even blood ties do not warrant inherent trust. After all, it is Qara Kōz and Khanzada’s own brother, Babar, who hands them over to their enemy. Vespucci’s father and grandmother lie to him about his ancestry and put his life in danger when they send him off to tell the emperor that he is, in fact, someone he is not. Akbar’s favored wise men are murdered by Akbar’s son, Salim, and Akbar believes one day his sons will try to murder him, too: “He loved them. They would betray him. They were the lights of his life. They would come for him while he slept” (58).

That individuals within a singular location, not only among different ones, are equally flawed is an argument that further assists in the narrative’s destabilization of the first layer’s favoritism towards communities of descent. Those particularists distrust people outside their circles of

origin, yet a commonly flawed humanity means that even one's own are untrustworthy. One is no safer at home than among strangers, a point which both prompts and justifies the exile of the next layer's characters.

While effectively making its point, the second layer's doubling becomes a somewhat fatigued, because predictable, tool. Even in instances when the narrative complicates the trope of replication, these moments tend only to finally reinforce the narrative's central theme of the cursed similitude of the human race. For example, the mirror trope is employed to problematize character's responses to their perceived replication in someone else. After Vespucci has expounded upon the similarity among Akbar and his Western mirror, Elizabeth, Akbar responds with an impulse to power and domination: "We think we must have her at once" (73-74). Similarly, Qara Köz's relationship with her mirror is shown to be more than a love affair, but also a relationship based on unequal power. The Mirror is Qara Köz's servant and is forced to go along with the Princess after Qara Köz and Khanzada are given to Lord Wormwood: "If she, Qara Köz, was to be Khanzada's [prisoner], then the little slave girl, the Mirror, would be hers. [...] Human beings were clutched at, and clutched at others in their turn. If power was a cry, then human lives were lived in the echo of the cries of others" (125). This maligned type of mirroring is a significant motif in the narrative, and one which includes the way many people project themselves onto Qara Köz, the way she becomes "all things to all people, an exemplar, a lover, an antagonist, a muse" (200). Analogous to the material object, the mirror, this demonstrates how characters can see too much of themselves (and their own desires) in another. Creating too little a boundary between self and other is thus shown to be as problematic as perceiving too thick a boundary. While on one hand, this textures the mirror trope, though, on the other hand, it winds

up inevitably reinforcing the notion of replication, as this tendency simply evinces yet another way that characters from diverse locations and temporalities manifest common character defects.

Besides the novel's profusion of irreducible elements of magic, *Enchantress*'s many reverberations link the narrative to magical realism. Faris notes that "repetition as a narrative principle, in conjunction with mirrors or their analogues used symbolically or structurally" is a characteristic of the mode ("Scheherazade" 177).¹¹ The *doppelgänger* is a hallmark technique of the mode's progenitors Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino.¹² Rushdie himself has employed this device in his previous magical realist novels, such as *Shame* and *The Satanic Verses*.

What is significant about this technique in *Enchantress* is the use to which Rushdie puts it. He does not employ it as Borges and Calvino often did, to create an aesthetic labyrinth or mind puzzle or to generally interrogate the limits of knowledge. Nor is it utilized as Rushdie has in the past, to suggest a profound interconnectedness among specific characters (though this aspect is not absent from *Enchantress*). *The Satanic Verses*' two protagonists Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha function as character doubles. They share a common Indian ethnic and national heritage; a common career (acting); and a common family history, in, for example, the deaths of their mothers and alienation from their fathers. However, this utilization of doubling functions to dramatize the interconnectedness of the two men, as is made apparent by their fall from the plane and the subsequent mixing of characteristics, such as Saladin's acquiring Gibreel's halitosis. This interrelatedness, in turn, suggests a comparative consideration of their differing migrant experiences (7, 137). Similarly, in *Shame* the two dominant families, the Hyders and the Harappas, reflect each other in numerous ways, but here this points again to linking, though this time the objects of association are Pakistan's two elite political families. One particularly macabre example of this is when Raza Hyder's stillborn son foreshadows Isky Harappa's

hanging: “An umbilical cord wound itself around the baby’s neck and was transformed into a hangman’s noose (in which other nooses are prefigured)” (82). *Enchantress*’s repetition does show cultural interconnectedness, but it ultimately suggests more than that. As I hope is clear by now, there is an important, and indeed predominant, way in which *Enchantress*’s doubling illustrates a basic similitude among both sides of the world, a comparison that renders entanglement somewhat superfluous, almost unnecessary.

If *Enchantress*’s use of doubling suggests a peculiarity within the magical realist corpus, though, it seems a latent possibility, a potential always already there within the mode’s aesthetics. According to Faris, one effect of repetition in magical realism is that “the notion of origin itself is undercut” (“Scheherazade” 178). Faris is describing this in terms of its demonstrating magical realism’s postmodern literary attributes, while *Enchantress*’s handling of it is distinctly anti-postmodern in its rendering an essential human nature. Nevertheless, the destabilization of origins is precisely what is at work in *Enchantress*’s repetitions—its mirroring, doubles, echoes—and this is at play on several levels.

It undermines the notion of origin in terms of Self as the original position against which to define the corresponding identity of Other, or not-Self. This is an ontological function. It poses the question, if there is a profound sameness among “the human race,” then where is the dividing line between Self and Other? Who are one’s Others? As Italian and Catholic-born Argalia realizes in an epiphanic moment in the narrative when he identifies similarities among himself and Muslims, those whom he had, up until this moment, always considered his enemy: “‘Is our proper adversary not our antithesis? Can the face we see in the mirror be our foe?’” (172). The reverberations of similar ideas (heliocentrism, rulership, selfhood) assists a comparable kind of destabilization at the level of culture.

This latter instance of cultural mirroring also works to unsettle the notion of origin in the sense of origination and, by extension, superiority and authority in East/West interaction, as neither half of the globe can claim to have originated the groundbreaking ideas of the modern world. This use of doubling interrogates the basis of power, enacting a political function. Viewing doubling from this angle suggests how, paradoxically, Rushdie's historical novel addresses contemporary East/West issues, those orbiting around the 9/11 conflict and those related to colonization.¹³

While it is difficult, and would indeed be problematic, to consider the world apart from these historical issues, they have led critics to conceptual standstills. For example, postcolonial scholars have been seeking ways to move beyond the colonizer/colonized binary, as exemplified by Bhabha's "Third Space of enunciation," Mary Louis Pratt's "contact zone," and Said's "contrapuntal" readings. Rushdie's *Enchantress* offers another response, addressing the issue in the form of creative writing. His approach to these entrenched perspectives involves starting over. As he himself says, with *Enchantress* he "go[es] back to the beginning" of the East/West engagement ("Conversation"). From this edenic new beginning, Rushdie defamiliarizes the contemporary sensibility concerning the hemispheric binary. He does this not only by historicizing these events, situating them within a broader spectrum of time, but also by presenting East(erners) and West(erners) amidst an ambiguous political space, when the modern world is still being settled, claimed, and carved.

After having moved far enough back in time to precede the heyday of colonization (Amerigo Vespucci has just recently discovered *Mundus Novus*), Rushdie presents the two civilizations as mirror images, both in their capacities for cultural flowering and for exploitation, if with a creative slight of hand. A memorable example of this is the scene suggesting that Akbar could

have led his empire into becoming one of the global colonizing forces, he simply did not want to bother with it. Akbar proves to be aware of the beginning of expeditions of other empires and the claims of fortunes and magical beings awaiting them there: “Maybe there were hydras in those climes, or griffins, or dragons guarding the great treasure heaps that reputedly lay in the jungles’ depths. The Spanish and the Portuguese were welcome to it all” (330). That the Mughal empire would have been a major colonizing force of the New World works against any essentialist romanticization of a monolith called the colonized and a converse demonization of the colonizer with another essentialist argument, the human race.

If Rushdie’s novel acts as a voice in postcolonial and East/West issues, though, it does so in a distinctive way. His use of doubling in *Enchantress* is very different from Bhabha’s handling of it, through which the latter also counters binaries generated by colonization. For Bhabha doubling represents the impossibility of sameness. It is related to the splitting which occurs with hybridity and is opposed to the notion that there can be a replication between original and copy. This allows a subversive potential, what he refers to as “the third space,” for the colonial other when what is translated becomes something different than the object from which the translation stemmed:

In each of these cases we see a colonial doubling which I have described as a strategic displacement of value through a process of the metonymy of presence. It is through this partial process, represented in its enigmatic, inappropriate signifiers – stereotypes, jokes, multiple and contradictory belief, the “native” Bible – that we begin to get a sense of a specific space of cultural colonial discourse. It is a “separate” space, a space of *separation* – less than one and double – which has been systematically denied by both colonialists and nationalists who have sought authority in the authenticity of “origins.”

In the process of doubling, the secondary product represents an alteration and resistance of replication, thus showing up the impossibility of any pure original on which authority is based. In Bhabha’s words: “Doubling repeats the fixed and empty presence of authority by articulating

it syntagmatically with a range of differential knowledges and positionalities that both estrange its 'identity' and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power" (*Location* 119-20). It reveals a disruption and destabilization in ostensible continuity. The movement from prior to posterior in doubling always creates something both "less than" and other than.

Enchantress, as has been seen, works in the opposite direction. Instead of representing a "'separate' space," doubling here reveals underlying continuity, and it is with this that Rushdie's narrative similarly rejects any propagation of origin as authoritative and/or superior. These are two very different usages of the same motif, one in postcolonial theory, the other in postcolonial literature. While Bhabha has used Rushdie's earlier novel, *The Satanic Verses*, as an exemplar of his theorizations of the translations which occur in the process of hybridity, Rushdie's most recent novel sharply diverges from Bhabha at this point. What is more, while the narrative focal point of East/West issues in *Enchantress* suggests a point of continuity within Rushdie's own work, as this has been a consistent focus of his writing and one which he has also addressed using doubling, what is noteworthy in this text is the line of reasoning with which he engages it, the "aliqueness" of the "human race."

Layer Three: Exile

Whereas the first layer of *Enchantress*'s palimpsestic cosmopolitan map is composed of characters who achieve belonging through the circumscribed attachments of birth, and the second layer undermines that strategy by illustrating the similarity of the flawed human race, an analysis of the narrative's response to the question of belonging would be incomplete without considering a third layer demonstrating an alternative way of being in the world, exile. If the particularist strategy of belonging is defined by origins, or inherited ties, the exile strategy of

belonging means stepping outside of those ties for meaning, identity, place, and guidelines for thinking and behavior. In *Enchantress*, this type of exile is sometimes psychological only, involving an altered perspective, while in other cases it coincides with a traditional understanding, a physical egress from the attachments of birth. Akbar, Qara Köz, Guldaban, The Rana of Cooch Naheen, and Argalia all represent one or both of these kinds, if in nuanced ways, though only the first two will be explored here.

Almost as soon as Akbar's character is introduced, the narrative signals his association with the psychological form of exile, an internal severing from the intellectual-behavioral milieu in which he finds himself: "[He] longed for a different world, [...] a world in which he could forsake the gloating satisfactions of conquest for the gentler yet more taxing joys of discourse. Did such a world exist? By what road could it be reached?" (35). As the Mughal emperor, a key aspect of Akbar's exile centers around rulership, or how he might best govern the people. Unlike his ancestors, who dominated by bloodshed, Akbar desires a radically different means of reigning. In this instance, he is contemplating a kind of rulership through open discourse and debate.

In other moments, he ponders the culturally radical ideas of religious pluralism and a society governed by secular humanism. Akbar's philosophical searching underlines his juxtaposition to his predecessors and peers who have failed to conceive of a better way of being: "The emperor wanted to confess his secret disappointment in all mystics and philosophers" (83). He dreams of starting from scratch: "He wanted to sweep the whole argument aside, to erase the centuries of inheritance and reflection, and allow man to stand naked as a baby upon the throne of heaven" (83). Instead of deferring to or even integrating the ways of thought, being, and rulership which

he has inherited, Akbar wants to detach himself and his empire from existing religious, philosophical, and political tradition and there, in a radical newness begin again.

It seems that his specific context in Sikri is not solely what is at issue here, but tradition itself is problematic. Bequeathed attachments and models are, in their very nature, suspect, Akbar intimates in his complaints against religious belief:

[...] why should one hold fast to a religion not because it was true but because it was the faith of one's fathers. Was faith not faith but simple family habit? Maybe there was no true religion but only this eternal handing down. And error could be handed down as easily as virtue. Was faith no more than the error of our ancestors? (83)

The unthinking submission to a pre-existing orthodoxy which is quite possibly untrustworthy is the basis on which he criticizes not only religion, but also the black arts: “[...] was it not a kind of infantilization of the self to give up one's power of agency and believe that such power resided outside oneself rather than within?” This principle, by extension, implies that all inherited codes are unreliable and, like his complaint with belief in God, “deprived human beings of the right to form ethical structures by themselves” (318). Akbar's solution to subservience to tradition is self-discovery and invention: “Wherever goodness lay, it did not lie in ritual, unthinking obeisance before a deity but rather, perhaps, in the slow, clumsy, error-strewn working out of an individual or collective path” (310). The good, it seems, must be made in the present and severed from the past.

The alienation this methodology implies explains why it is necessary that Akbar desire a *different* world from the one in which he exists. The only choice he has left is to detach himself from his surroundings and enter into a kind of self-imposed, internal exile. Of course, he has the luxury of toying with this kind of socio-political defiance because of his status as absolute ruler, which allows him to arbitrate the law rather than having to be subject also to physical exile (or worse) for his deviation from the norm. Nevertheless, even this milder form of exile carries

consequences, as the emperor recognizes. While pondering some of his strange new concepts, such as those listed above, ideas he fears even his most trusted advisors will not understand, he thinks to himself: “If he, Akbar, stepped outside the circle, could he live without its comforting circularity, in the terrifying strangeness of a new thought?” (83-84). The emperor wonders whether or not he can withstand the loneliness of this kind of separation and the fear of the unknown encountered there, though, it should be noted, he does not question the possibility of getting outside one’s cultural circle to begin with. That is already assumed.

The exile characters of the third layer are often juxtaposed to particularists from the first, a point which suggests the concomitant juxtaposition of their strategies of belonging. Argalia is set against Machia, as has already been seen, and Qara Kōz is contrasted with Jodha, as will be seen next. As Akbar’s introspection implies, the emperor is undergoing an internal struggle throughout the narrative, illustrating that in addition to his ancestors and peers, one of the key characters he is foiled against is himself. His inner battle can be seen as hinging on the question of stepping outside the circle: he vacillates between adhering to the particularist strategy of belonging and breaking from tradition, staying within the circle or getting out of it.

Akbar’s struggle is concentrated around his treatment of the visitor to his court, Vespucci, as the narrative signals: “He felt that he had arrived at a turning point, and that this decision about the foreigner was somehow at its heart” (317). This is due to the many ways Vespucci violates Sikri’s sacralization of origins, that organizing emblem of the particularist strategy of belonging. Vespucci’s birth is illicit, Akbar’s advisor determines when he interprets (one of) the former’s pseudonyms, the Mogor dell’Amore, as “*a Mughal born out of wedlock*” (93). Furthermore, his ethnicity is Western, which, to Akbar’s advisors and family, renders the blond-haired man suspicious from the outset. Finally, this foreigner is claiming to be Akbar’s uncle, a scandalous

assertion which, if true, makes him part of the royal family and thus forces the emperor to ascertain the true details of Vespucci's secret lineage.

How will Akbar treat such an ambiguous and polemical figure? On one hand, he can adhere to the traditional means through which Mughals evaluate others, on the basis of (un)shared natal ties, and consequently reject Vespucci. On the other hand, he can reject this particularist rubric and judge Vespucci as a fellow human being, something he does for a time: "The emperor was [...] inclined to be compassionate. 'He is a homeless man looking for a place in the world' [...]. Who knows why he was cast out? We find that we enjoy him and do not care, for the present, to unravel his mysteries" (202). Akbar determines to consider his guest on the basis of his proven character and skill: "The emperor had tested him and found great merit there. He was not an enemy. He was a favorite. He deserved to be praised, not blamed" (309).

So impressed is Akbar with Vespucci that he even contemplates the outrageous and rare possibility of deeming Vespucci a *farzand*, or honorary son:

[...] should he make the foreigner, Mogor dell' Amore, also known as Niccolò Vespucci, the teller of tall tales who outrageously claimed to be his uncle, who was proving himself to be such an adept administrator and counselor, and to whom he had taken such an unexpected liking, into his honorary son? The rank of *farzand* was among the least-bestowed, most coveted honors in the empire, and anyone who was awarded the title was at once admitted into the emperor's inner circle. (316)

To make Vespucci a *farzand*, to collapse the particularist's two domains of insiders and outsiders by bringing this foreigner into his inner circle flies in the face of his society's esteeming of origins. Furthermore, with this act Akbar suggests defying the particularist strategy of rulership, that predetermined by bloodline, for it makes Vespucci eligible for the role instead of Akbar's actual sons, as Prince Salim jealously realizes. Akbar's children have proven to be murderous, opium-addicted, and generally inadequate rulers, while Vespucci has proven politically adept, and therefore superior to them. For Akbar to allow Vespucci to rule would mean choosing a

leader based on rationality and the good of the empire rather than on the arbitrary factor of bloodline. Akbar's decision about making Vespucci a *farzand* is thus a crucial test determining whether or not he can become the ruler he hopes.

In the end, Akbar fails, and his failure, like his decision about Vespucci, pivots around the issue of origins. Akbar discovers that Vespucci, unbeknownst to him, is indeed the product of an illicit union, thus affirming his name Mogor dell'Amore, so Akbar relinquishes the opportunity of sonship:

[...] he concluded that such a child, the offspring of an immoral liaison, could not be recognized as a member of the royal family. In spite of Vespucci's own obvious innocence in the matter, and indeed his ignorance of his true origins, and no matter how great his charms or talents, that one word, *incest*, placed him beyond the pale. (340)

That Akbar rejects Vespucci because of his incestuous heritage, his impurity, shows that he has come down on the side of particularism and its treasuring of pure origins. (Though, Akbar himself will hypocritically commit this same act later.)

The narrative denounces Akbar's decision, and therefore his particularism, in that after he rejects Vespucci, he opts for the morally and politically inferior decision of embracing his murderous son, Salim: "So there was only Salim; no matter what he had done the continuity of the line must be assured" (326). Also, Akbar himself acknowledges and repents of the "injustice" he enacted upon Vespucci. That this decision is unjust is affirmed by the fact that Akbar incurs the curse placed on those who mistreat Vespucci: the lake of Sikri dries up and its inhabitants are forced to leave (347-48).

Besides Akbar, another key exile figure is Qara Kōz. Initially, the princess is forced to leave home after being relinquished to Lord Wormwood; however, at this point her exile is only physical. This changes when Qara Kōz and her sister, Khanzada, are freed by Shah Ismail of Persia. The Shah is prepared to return the women home, but Qara Kōz refuses his offer:

Qara Kōz shook off her sister's hand, threw off her veil, and looked the young king right in the face.

"I would like to stay," she said.

[...] Shah Ismail of Persia drowned in the seventeen-year-old princess's black eyes.

"Then stay," he replied.

By defying her primary loyalty to family and home by choosing to remain in a foreign land among foreign people, Qara Kōz evinces her rejection of particularism. She thus joins physical exile with its psychological and behavioral counterpart. For this, she is renounced by her brother, the emperor, as a traitor, as Guldaban recounts: "'This is why she was erased from our family history: she preferred life among foreigners to an honored place in her own home'" (109-10).

As this scene with the Shah depicts, Qara Kōz, also called Lady Black Eyes, wields supernatural powers. Besides being the most beautiful woman in the world, she is also an enchantress. The key end to which the Mughal princess employs her powers of enchantment is to enable her power of choice. Repeatedly, the princess is described by her "willfulness." As Vespucci is telling the unknown story of Qara Kōz to Akbar, the emperor marvels at her, calling her the "*genetrix*" of his own bloodline:

"[...] how many great matters have followed from her choice! [...] So if your story is true, then the beginning of our own empire is the direct consequence of the willfulness of Qara Kōz."

[...] "She was a beautiful, willful girl," said Mogor dell'Amore. (216)

Qara Kōz's magic, then, both underscores and enables her desire for autonomy.

Significant in the princess's situation is the way the narrative creates an opposition between her autonomy and particular attachments to communities of descent. Like Machia, the narrative forces her to face conflicting loyalties instead of the possibility of assimilating various levels of attachments. Unlike him, though, she rejects her natal ties—her siblings and home—choosing exile and autonomy instead. The narrative further structures this dichotomy by suggesting that in order for her to exercise volitional freedom, she cannot return home. The two are antithetical to

each other. This certainly has something to do with the nature of her choices: her refusal to wear the veil; her bisexuality; and her feminism. But it also involves the wider framework of the narrative, the way that communities of descent are in and of themselves antithetical to autonomy as they are bequeathed rather than chosen and in this way impinge upon individual choice, as Akbar has voiced.

Qara Köz's rejection of particular affiliations coincides with her rejection of the particularist strategy of belonging. The narrative emphasizes this in its foiling of Qara Köz with her family members, who clearly belong in the first layer of the narrative's cosmopolitan map. By not returning home, she is opposed to her brother, Babar, who clearly displays his belief that the attachments of birth are the natural and only place for a person when he disowns his sister. She is also juxtaposed against Khanzada, who displays her subservience to natal ties by returning home. The severing of Qara Köz's ties to her particularist family members, then, overlaps with her rejection of particularism. This is significant, because in *Enchantress* these two aspects are often one and the same: characters who cherish particular ties are often also particularists, which explains why exile and not integration is presented as the alternative strategy of belonging.

Further insight into Qara Köz's chosen strategy of belonging is illuminated by the way she contrasts with another character, Jodhabai. The narrative suggests a comparative consideration of these two magical and royal female figures, showing preference for Qara Köz. The enchantress replaces Jodha in Akbar's fantasies and in his court because, Akbar intimates, she is superior to Jodha: "[...] there were things she understood that Jodha had never grasped" (309). While in this moment Akbar is praising Qara Köz's appreciation of silence, the narrative also suggests that Qara Köz is superior in her strategy of belonging.

As with Jodha, Qara Kōz's strategy is illustrated through the magic associated with her character. Jodha's magical existence, it has been seen, literalizes the particularism of the narrative's first layer. Her existence depends upon her points of origin, Akbar and the palace, a physical limitation reflected in her psychological limitations, her closed-mindedness towards both outsiders and the outside world. Qara Kōz, in distinction, employs her magic to travel across the world. This implies the divergent attitudes held by each woman towards the relationships among origin, meaning, belonging, identity, and place. Whereas Jodha is content to be restricted to the fancy of the emperor and the limitations of home, Qara Kōz bravely chooses a life of exile over inherited resources of belonging in order to travel, form the direction and meaning of her own life, and experience the world outside her home.

Suggesting one point of similarity among the women, though, Qara Kōz is constrained in this respect: her powers of enchantment, and thus autonomy, must work through the channels of men's desire: "She had built her life on being loved by men, on being certain of her ability to engender such love whenever she chose to do so" (256). It was "as if life was a river and men its stepping stones" (349). Another limitation she faces involves the nature of the world in which she lives, one which assesses people based on the attachments of their birth. Because of this, Qara Kōz must bewitch not only powerful men, but also entire foreign cities and regions which she visits. This proves a dangerous means of existence, though, for when her magical capacity wanes, the Florentines turn on her almost overnight, becoming a mob seeking to bring revenge upon the witch whom they believe has murdered their duke.

Qara Kōz eventually fails to sustain her exile, however, not because of her limited power, but because her freedom of choice proves too costly:

Her life had been a series of acts of will, but sometimes she wavered and sank. [...] when the darkest questions of the self were asked [...] she felt her soul shudder and crack under

the weight of her isolation and loss [...]. This was the inevitable consequence of having chosen to step away from her natural world. (257)

In the end, Qara Köz, like Akbar, succumbs to the pressure inflicted upon her by exile; deeply lonely, she determines to return home. Also as with Akbar, this is shown to be a poor choice: “Dreaming of finding her way back to her point of origin, of being rejoined to that earlier self, she was lost forever” (331). In fact, more than poor, this choice is shown to be perverse, for the means through which she achieves this homecoming is an incestuous affair with her great-nephew, Akbar, who has assisted in bringing her back from the dead. Incest in this sense is perverse in that it signals particularism, that incestuous strategy of belonging. By going back home and foregoing exile, she embraces this strategy in which the closed circles of family and home represent the exclusive and “natural” channels of love and loyalty. Incest functions differently, then, in each situation, Akbar/Vespucci and Qara Köz/Akbar, yet whether it is denounced or engaged in, it is similarly employed to indict these unsuccessful exiles, Qara Köz and Akbar, both of whom fail to continue in the superior, alternative means of being in the world, thus indicating *Enchantress*’s pessimism concerning the possibility of exile’s sustainment.¹⁴

The third layer of *Enchantress*’s cosmopolitan map presents the other side of the coin, so to speak, of Machia’s two-circled cartography described in the first layer, that which divides the globe among two groups or kinds of people. When Qara Köz travels away from home, it is not to find belonging among another location. Wherever she travels, she simply finds more characters who guard their circumscribed identities, which means she must remain in a state of permanent exile, uniting only with others who, like her lover Argalia, have similarly exiled themselves from the particularist strategy of belonging. While the content of the groupings of Qara Köz’s map differs from Machia’s, then, they are similarly composed of the dual categories of insiders and

outsiders, the only difference being that in Qara Kız's case this corresponds to exiles and particularists.

Concluding this look at the structure of *Enchantress's* cosmopolitan cartography, what can one infer concerning the narrative's answer to the primary concern of this chapter, the overall strategy of belonging constructed in *Enchantress*? Through the multiple layers of its map, the narrative offers various responses to the question of belonging, how it is and should be formulated. Yet, when viewed together, in its palimpsestic entirety, all three strata stacked atop one another, theoretical contours begin to emerge of a cohesive shape of *Enchantress's* attitude(s) about belonging. At one point, one can clearly locate an overt suspicion of many traditional forms of solidarity, especially bequeathed intellectual, religious, and political affiliations. At another is the endorsement of stepping outside these circles. And at a final point is the intellectually and morally implicational verity of the "aliqueness" of humanity. This, the narrative suggests, is the appropriate way of being in the world, even if one which is unlikely to be sustained.

Universal Cosmopolitanism

The form of *Enchantress's* multi-layered strategy of belonging comes more sharply into focus when it is considered alongside contemporary theorizations of cosmopolitanism, specifically the universalist strain advocated by Nussbaum. This is because the points plotted on *Enchantress's* palimpsestic map suggest a strong affinity with that theoretical position in their common prescriptions and prohibitions for belonging and being in the world, as will become clear from both Nussbaum's own writings and from that of her critics.

Perhaps the most conspicuous feature they share is their deprecation of social solidarities whose cohesion is achieved through links smaller than humankind, especially when these kinds

of affiliations are inherited. This aspect of *Enchantress* has been shown at length in, for example, the narrative's derogatory rendering of the many characters such as Jodha and Machiavelli who hold particular, traditional ties and who are often, then, also rendered particularists. As for Nussbaum, this stance becomes visible through one of the tools her writing has contributed to this study to help determine the strategies of belonging constructed in each of the novels, the narratives' attitudes towards the accidents of birth, or natal ties such as family and community. As described in chapter one, Nussbaum refers to the attachments into which one is born as "accidents" in order to undermine the preferential treatment they often enjoy. It is also apparent in a similar point she makes here:

[...] we should not allow differences of nationality or class or ethnic membership or even gender to erect barriers between us and our fellow human beings. We should recognize humanity wherever it occurs, and give its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral capacity, our first allegiance and respect. ("Patriotism" 7)

Small-level ties, in Nussbaum's perception, tend to create obstacles to the primary, or "first" respect each of us owes to universal humanity. This is a moral issue for Nussbaum, as emphasized by her use of the word *should*, twice. More explicitly, she argues elsewhere that the accidental affiliations within which one finds one's self are "morally arbitrary" as limits of human concern, subordinate to the "equal worth" of all humanity ("Patriotism" 14; "Introduction" xii).¹⁵ Nussbaum's comments here raise other shared features among her brand of cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolitan mapping undertaken in *Enchantress*. As in Rushdie's narrative, Nussbaum grounds her denigration of particular attachments in a moral argument which appeals to the shared humanity of all people.¹⁶

The censure of vernacular loyalties located in Nussbaum's and Rushdie's writing speaks to these intellectuals' sensitivity towards circumscribed belonging and the negative outcomes this has historically engendered. *Enchantress*, not to mention other fiction and non-fiction pieces of

Rushdie's as well as his personal experience, is replete with examples of crimes committed in the name of religion and polity. Similarly, Nussbaum focuses her attention on the harmful effects of nationalism, though in *Cultivating Humanity* she also voices her concern with the "prevalence" in "the literary academy" of multiculturalism gone awry and, related, identity politics, that "which holds that one's primary affiliation is with one's local group" (109-11). Their anxiety over such instances of atomization is not unique to these figures, moreover, but, according to Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, this is a matter linking cosmopolitans across the spectrum. It is one of the primary exigencies behind the resurgence of the contemporary cosmopolitan conversation: "What are the processes and conditions that have led to a call to conceive cosmopolitanism afresh?" Among "globalization, nationalism, migration, multiculturalism and feminism," they add: "The excesses displayed and atrocities committed by those who evince narrow religious and ethnic identities, have led to the urgent reposing of two basic cosmopolitan questions: Can we ever live peacefully with one another? What do we share, collectively, as human beings?" (1).

That Rushdie and Nussbaum engage with this issue suggests their participation within the cosmopolitan conversation. At the same time, however, it is their responses to these "excesses" and "atrocities" that distinguish them from other cosmopolitans, especially that group David Hollinger calls the new cosmopolitans. In an effort to bring clarity to the resurgence of cosmopolitanism in the 1990s, Hollinger isolates a group of theorists who, though positioned within a host of disciplines, are conjoined by a similar approach to the idea(1). His list includes, among others, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Robert Pinsky, Benjamin Barber, Bruce Robbins, and Pheng Cheah. These new cosmopolitans, he suggests, are "marking out a distinctive doctrinal

position between what I believe is best called the ‘universalism’ of Nussbaum and the ‘pluralism’ of Will Kymlicka” (228).

Hollinger distinguishes between the new cosmopolitans and Nussbaum by way of the presence or absence of a verbal modifier accompanying their invocations of cosmopolitanism. The new cosmopolitans often qualify their theorizations, generating a host of terms: “vernacular cosmopolitanism, rooted cosmopolitanism, critical cosmopolitanism, comparative cosmopolitanism, national cosmopolitanism, discrepant cosmopolitanism, situated cosmopolitanism and actually existing cosmopolitanism” (228). This tendency unites them, even if their specific modifiers differ, Hollinger contends, in that it signals a common urge to ground what has historically been seen as an unappealingly abstract and detached way of being in the world. “The point of a rooted, situated, national, vernacular, critical, and so on, cosmopolitanism,” Hollinger explains, “is to bring cosmopolitanism down to earth, to indicate that cosmopolitanism can deliver some of the goods ostensibly provided only by patriots, provincials, parochials, populists, tribalists and above all nationalists” (229).

In contrast, Nussbaum leaves her cosmopolitanism unmodified, a detail which is significant to Hollinger, for it indicates the universalist leanings of her theorizations. Hollinger protests: “The universalist insight which drives Nussbaum and her non-modified comrades, is that even the least blood-intensive and least chauvinistic of national solidarities threaten to inhibit any transnational project strong enough to serve the interests of a wider human population” (“Not” 230-31). If the modified cosmopolitans want to incorporate into a regard for humanity the “goods” furnished by groups smaller than that universal grouping, Nussbaum’s universalist invocation responds to the crimes committed in the names of various restricted identities and belonging by treating those attachments as morally suspect impediments.

In his distinction of modified and unmodified cosmopolitanisms, Hollinger moves to contend that Nussbaum's theorizations should actually be removed from the body of theory called *cosmopolitanism*. Though she herself identifies her concepts as cosmopolitanism, Hollinger wants to resituate them as, simply, universalism: "She is for cosmopolitanism, unmodified, although [...] her position is best represented as 'universalist'" (229). While Hollinger's arguments skillfully outline the contemporary cosmopolitan debate, to argue as he does that Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism is not actually what she claims it is seems a difficult position to take, as Nussbaum bases her theorizations on the classical Stoic version of cosmopolitanism, as Hollinger notes. Moreover, this lineage attests to the fact that universalism has been an important component of cosmopolitanism throughout its long history, not only its classical articulations but also later in Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. Moreover, universalism is inherent in the idea(l)'s very definition: a cosmopolite, or cosmopolitan, is a "citizen of the world" (*Oxford*). According to Nussbaum, this was the Greek Cynic Diogenes' response to someone who asked him where he came from ("Patriotism" 4). Of course, this denotation of cosmopolitanism is contentious, and a large part of the cosmopolitan debate might be seen as theorists' various attempts to discern what it means, exactly, to be a "citizen" in the "world."

One cannot, furthermore, separate cosmopolitan theory into a simple distinction wherein universalist-inclined cosmopolitanism represents a past articulation while vernacular cosmopolitanism represents its contemporary embodiment. Besides Nussbaum, there are numerous examples of universalist cosmopolitanisms being advocated today. Robbins notes its recent resurgence ("Introduction" 2).¹⁷ Amanda Anderson esteems what she identifies as the universalist cosmopolitanism of Julia Kristeva.

Finally, Nussbaum's writings on cosmopolitanism have played a key role in shaping the contemporary debate, even if to help others decide what they dislike about her articulation of it, as Hollinger's argument as well as the sixteen responses to Nussbaum's "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" article attest.¹⁸ It seems apparent, then, that the universalist-leaning position represented by Nussbaum is already situated within the spectrum of cosmopolitanism. In contrast to Nussbaum's identifying her concepts as, simply, cosmopolitanism and Hollinger's referring to them as unmodified cosmopolitanism or universalism, this study designates Nussbaum's position as universal cosmopolitanism. Nussbaum herself does not give this nomenclature to her theorizations, but it is the universalist characteristics of her cosmopolitanism that is commonly emphasized by her critics as they move to distinguish the embodiment she has come to represent from other, more "rooted" ones.¹⁹ Therefore, this term is helpful for demarcating this strain of cosmopolitanism from others, while allowing it to retain a place within the conversation.

Returning to Hollinger's distinction among modified and unmodified cosmopolitanisms, one could transpose his argument into the cosmopolitan visual tool of concentric circles, that which imagines a person's attachments as rings, or levels, which begin with kith and kin and extend outwards to humanity in general. According to Hollinger's description, the new cosmopolitans take the intermediary rings seriously and fill in the social-psychological expanse between self and humanity. Instead of viewing particular and universal attachments as oppositions, they recognize the value and even inescapability of graduated levels of social solidarity. In contrast, universal cosmopolitans recommend, and this with the force of moral oughtness, that one skip from the level of the individual, the smallest ring, to universal humanity, the widest ring. In this, they do not sufficiently account for the many rings in between, but all too readily pass over them.

Rushdie's *Enchantress* exhibits its universal cosmopolitan bent especially in this way: its strategy of belonging fails to account for varying levels of attachments, posing instead an either/or opposition between particular ties and exile (detachment from them). While the new cosmopolitans suggest that one can possess attachments to small and large levels, and so view belonging as being constituted of a gradation of loyalties, *Enchantress* does not, overall, seem to allow within its framework the ability to integrate various levels of attachments.

This approach to belonging begins to underline the universalist characteristics of this strain of cosmopolitanism. With the pitting of the universal against the particular, *Enchantress*'s and Nussbaum's universal cosmopolitanism implies there is a singular way of being in the world. Robbins describes this aspect of Nussbaum's ideal: "[...] there could be only one cosmopolitanism, for there is only one 'worldwide community of human beings,'" quoting Nussbaum's definition of cosmopolitanism ("Introduction" 2). This position does not allow for the multiple, complex ways through which people derive senses of place in the world, as Robbins describes and advocates when he contends that cosmopolitanism has now been pluralized: "Like nations, cosmopolitanisms are now plural and particular" ("Introduction" 2). By adding the letter *s* onto cosmopolitanism, Robbins signals the concept's new embodiment, which he understands as signifying infinite, even clashing ways of being in the world which are formulated through diverse combinations of attachments at varying levels of scale.

Universal cosmopolitanism's singular way of being in the world can be located in the figure of the exile. After all, what situation is left for the individual after vernacular ties are denigrated as morally suspicious in contrast to loyalty to humanity? Nussbaum explicitly couches her advocated position in these terms:

Becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business. It is, as Diogenes said, a kind of exile—from the comfort of local truths, from the warm, nestling feeling of patriotism,

from the absorbing drama of pride in oneself and one's own. [...] cosmopolitanism offers no such refuge; it offers only reason and the love of humanity, which may seem at times less colorful than other sources of belonging. (15)

While Nussbaum suggests that her universal cosmopolitanism furnishes an alternative, if “less colorful,” source of belonging, the lonely condition of the cosmopolitan exile presses one to wonder what it is that belonging to humanity offers? What does it provide a person except a kind of unmediated attachment between self and an abstract whole? This strategy of belonging does not seem to depict how human beings do and would want to live.

This gets to one of Calhoun's chief complaints against Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism, its “sociological deficiencies.” It is “remarkably unrealistic,” he decries, in its presenting the “illusion” that one can “escap[e] from social determinations into a realm of greater freedom, and of cultural partiality into greater universalism.” Instead, Calhoun insists on a more realistic depiction of human solidarity: “[...] when the limits of belonging to specific webs of relationships are transcended, this is not into a freedom from relationships but into a different organization of relationships” (536-37). If actual human beings cannot (and often do not want to) escape from social belonging, then the option of reattaching to the entity of abstract humanity is insufficient. Appiah makes a similar point when he writes: “Humanity isn't, in the relevant sense, an identity at all” (*Cosmopolitanism* 98). One is pressed to ask, then, what love of humanity means if not love of particular, actual people, flaws and all.

One of the benefits of studying cosmopolitanism through narrative, as opposed to its theoretical incarnations, is the way this medium fleshes out, and thus imaginatively tests, abstract ideals. This being the case, does Rushdie's novel do a better job than Nussbaum of representing belonging within a universalist cosmopolitan ideological framework? The answer, in short, is no. There are two predominant reasons for this. First, *Enchantress*'s depiction of exile demotes

small-level ties to a position even lower than that to which it is assigned in Nussbaum's writings, which means that its suggested strategy of belonging incurs at least the same charge of "sociological deficiency." Second, the position of the exiles in *Enchantress* generates structural and ideological conundrums.

The first issue of the demotion of small-level ties is perhaps captured best in a narrative moment not yet mentioned, one which has Argalia at its heart. Having recently left Italy, the young Argalia floats alone on a small raft out into the fog, an allegorical scene in which the literal experience of disconnection with the material world around him takes on a larger meaning. After abandoning his home in the hope of becoming a mercenary soldier, he realizes in this moment that he is utterly alone:

[...] This was what was left of a human individual when you took away his home, his family, his friends, his city, his country, his world: a being without context, whose past had faded, whose future was bleak, an entity stripped of name, of meaning, of the whole of life except a temporarily beating heart. "I am absurd," he told himself. "A cockroach in a steaming turd has more significance than I." Many years later, when he met Qara Kōz the hidden Mughal princess and his life finally acquired the meaning which destiny had in store for it, he saw the look of abandoned despair in her eyes and understood that she, too, had had to face the profound absurdity of the human condition. (175)

Here are the expanding rings of the concentric circles—individual, home, family, friends, city, country, world—a presence in the text which explicitly, if unintentionally, flags cosmopolitanism, and specifically that of Nussbaum's, by invoking the geometrical aid she has revived from the Stoics. However, the narrative diverges from Nussbaum's treatment of the gradated attachments the concentric circles represent, which in turn demonstrates a variance among *Enchantress's* and Nussbaum's postures towards small-level ties, as will be seen.

First, however, because this passage is somewhat complex it requires some unpacking, namely regarding Rushdie's employment of the word *absurd*. When Argalia initially mentions the term, when he recognizes of himself "I am absurd," he seems to be identifying the inability

of finding meaning and “significance” when stepping outside his social circles. Besides making an existentialist assertion, then, from this angle the narrative aligns itself with the new cosmopolitans in their arguing for the necessary and appropriate situatedness of people in social contexts. Okri’s *Famished* and García’s *Dreaming* take this position. In the latter novel, characters suffer psychological trauma to the extent that they are separated from their family nexuses. The term *absurd* as it is used the first time, then, would seem to imbue Argalia’s detachment with a negative connotation and thereby reinforce the need for attachments.

The second time the word *absurd* is used, however, the narrative clarifies that this cannot be the sense in which Argalia is using it, for now absurdity refers to “the human condition,” suggesting that it is the need of people to be integrated with varying levels of attachment that is nonsensical, a point which refers back to the narrative’s overall denigration of traditional particular ties such as family, home, polity, and religious affiliations.²⁰ This reading is reinforced by the fact that Argalia and Qara Köz must bravely “face” this absurd situation in order to push past it, a representation that causes Rushdie’s novel to share the criticism Calhoun levels against Nussbaum’s cosmopolitanism when he writes: “[...] Nussbaum presents the cosmopolitan not only as a deracinated individual, but as one who must demonstrate personal strength to achieve this, a kind of virtuoso performance of freedom” (538). This scene with Argalia also evokes Plato’s cave, as everyone is in this metaphysical “human condition,” but they are ignorant of that fact. Argalia and Qara Köz, however, escape to realize it.

Importantly, it is only through heroically confronting (and rejecting) this state of affairs that Argalia is able to find “meaning” and enter his “destiny.” This recalls the dichotomization of autonomy and inherited ties constructed with Qara Köz’s character and similarly suggests that it is both possible and necessary to find a sense of self-amidst-world outside of social solidarities.

It also evokes Akbar, who, though not physically exiled, must psychologically step outside of tradition, philosophy, and ancestry in order to find the path to the good.

While *Enchantress*'s depiction of heroic cosmopolitan exile compares to Nussbaum's in its commonly advocating a singular way of being in the world as well as in its censure of communities of descent, *Enchantress*'s depiction of attachments as absurd denigrates them further than she does. Nussbaum insists that universal humanity takes precedence over smaller loyalties, as has been seen; however, she still attributes some value to the rings in between self and humanity. At one point, she states explicitly: "The Stoics stress that to be a citizen of the world one does not need to give up local affiliations, which can be a source of great richness in life" ("Patriotism" 9). This statement needs some situating, though, for despite the appearance of her advocating integrated ties here, the issue the new cosmopolitans take with her view of small-level attachments is, as Appiah characterizes it, the way she considers them merely "instrumental": they are good only to the extent that they serve the largest level. This, Appiah suggests, disjunctively depicts thick loyalties as a "coolly cerebral," "impartial decision," a criticism which joins with Calhoun's critique of the way universal cosmopolitanism does not reflect how people actually live (241).

Appiah's description seems accurate when considered in conjunction with on an oft-quoted passage of Nussbaum's, wherein she explains that it is "good" to treat one's children with special attention, but only because it means that all children are best cared for this way: "To give one's own sphere special care is justifiable in universalist terms, and I think that this is its most compelling justification. [...] It is good for children, on the whole, that things should work out this way, and that is why our special care is good rather than selfish" (13). As this argument

illustrates, for Nussbaum the part is good because it supports the whole, her primary concern remaining the attachment between self and whole.

As an alternative, Appiah recommends what he calls “partial cosmopolitanism” because “a cosmopolitanism with prospects must reconcile a kind of universalism with the legitimacy of at least some forms of partiality” (223). He explains that the *partial* in *partial cosmopolitanism* applies to both senses of the word. It is partial in the sense of not being full cosmopolitanism, and it is partial because it recognizes the “feeling of special obligation” (*Ethics* 242). This assimilation of the universal and the particular demonstrates why Appiah is one of the figures Hollinger recognizes among the new cosmopolitans.

Still, Nussbaum assigns at least an “instrumental” value to the smaller rings, which attributes some credence to loyalties smaller than humanity as a whole, while *Enchantress* seems to abandon them completely by demoting them to “absurdity.” If, according to her critics, Nussbaum holds little value for the inescapable sociological role played by small-level social groups than Rushdie esteems them even less. This pessimism is exacerbated by the fact that exile largely fails: Qara Kōz and Akbar succumb to the incestuous ties of communities of descent and Argalia is murdered. Particularism wins in the end, a concluding derogatory view of natal ties. *Enchantress*’s more dismal landscape shows that while this narrative and Nussbaum’s theorizations share a similar position on the cosmopolitan spectrum, the former carves out a distinct space for itself within universal cosmopolitanism.

The second shortcoming in *Enchantress*’s illustration of its prescribed form of belonging involves a structural tension encompassed in the narrative’s cosmopolitan map, an issue which reflects an ideological tension in its universalist cosmopolitanism. As will be recalled, the second layer uses the device of repetition and character doubling to make its case for the basic similarity

among the human race, their shared nature. However, the narrative's third layer relies upon character foiling, or difference, in order to hold out its alternative strategy of belonging, exile. These opposing literary tools generate dissonance within the narrative's palimpsestic map as the second and third layers pull against each other. In other words, there is a logical incompatibility between the argument that characters—whom Akbar and Vespucci refer to simply as “the human race”—are fundamentally the same and the difference enacted (and recommended) by the exiles, who are exceptional in their ability to “step outside the circle” of their societies. Of course, the exiles' limited success suggests, finally, that these unusual characters are only temporarily different from their particularist counterparts. This, however, only raises another point of tension, for narrative's ideal of universal cosmopolitanism is ambivalent about itself: exile is extended, but dramatized as unlikely to be achieved. Both of these issues could be mitigated if *Enchantress* asserted only that civilizations, not the individual members of “the human race,” are similar. The significant differences among specific characters means that sameness can only be sustained on the level of people groups. In other words, it is the depicted civilizations that are comparable in that they contain both more and less admirable people. There appears to be slippage, then, between individuals and societies in Rushdie's application of universalism, a confusion over whether the similarity asserted is between West and East or between Westerners and Easterners.

Furthermore, and most problematic, is the opposition created within the cartographic structure among the third and first layers, that which represents the two strategies of belonging, exiles and closed-minded particularists. By pitting these against each other, *Enchantress* creates a division among characters and their accompanied means of being in the world. Yet, division among humanity is the very issue that the narrative's second layer, representing a universal human race, worked to undermine. Though the key distinction *Enchantress* seeks to unsettle is the

hemispheric divide, the more general polarity it confronts is an insider/outsider dichotomy, the same division it recasts between particularists and exiles.

These numerous structural and ideological aporias reflect the inability of *Enchantress* to sketch a cohesive, sustained depiction of universal cosmopolitanism, a shortcoming which not only implicates faults in the narrative, but the weaknesses in its theoretical presuppositions. If fictional, imagined scenarios cannot adequately portray universal cosmopolitanism, one must hold reservations about the ability of actual people to do so.

Beyond Hybridity

In numerous, important ways, *Enchantress* signals the stylistic and thematic continuity of Rushdie's nine novels. Written in the magical realist modality with strong historical elements, *Enchantress* is pervaded by themes of movement, migration, exile, hybridity, identity, and, of course, East and West. Also like his former novels, *Enchantress* provides a narrative habitus for a cast of characters which is dizzying in number, many of whom contribute to the narration. The intertext of *The Thousand and One Nights* makes its now hallmark Rushdiesque appearance, accompanied by an emphasis on storytelling. In other ways, however, *Enchantress* noticeably shifts away from Rushdie's corpus, both his fiction and nonfiction, and these points of change stem from the narrative's employment of the universal cosmopolitanism in which the narrative's strategy of belonging has just been positioned. *Enchantress*'s construction of this form of cosmopolitanism signifies an alteration in Rushdie's position on the cosmopolitan spectrum. This, moreover, involves an alteration in the methodology through which he opposes narrow conceptions of identity and place as well as in his employment of magical realism.

To bring these shifts into focus, I turn now to Calhoun's "'Belonging' in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary" (2003), an essay written prior to *Enchantress*. Herein Calhoun classifies four

“varieties” of cosmopolitanism: extreme, moderate, sociopsychological, and cultural. The first strain is the one he identifies with Nussbaum and a strong universalism.²¹ Calhoun contrasts Nussbaum’s extreme cosmopolitanism, what this chapter identifies as universal cosmopolitanism, with cultural cosmopolitanism, a category for which he holds out Rushdie and Bhabha as exemplars:

[...] the [cultural] cosmopolitanism they evoke is not the universalism of Nussbaum, but an infinitude of potential weavings together of more or less local traditions, cultural productivity that seeks to transcend particular traditions, and practices that seek to express traditions but not only to themselves. Necessarily, then, there is no singular cosmopolitanism adequate to the world as a whole – nor even any fixity of humanity as a whole – but rather a plurality of cosmopolitanisms. Likewise, it is not enough simply to contrast vernacular to cosmopolitan, the local tradition of small places to the larger traditions of broader spaces. It is crucial to see that these constitute each other. (540)

These aspects that Calhoun here praises in Rushdie—the value of local culture and traditions, if for the purpose of mixture; multiple cosmopolitanisms; no fixity to humanity; a balancing of vernacular and cosmopolitan—are the very ones against which *Enchantress* has been juxtaposed in the preceding section. (Many of these characteristics of cultural cosmopolitanism, in fact, reflect the ideals of the new cosmopolitans.) *Enchantress*, as has now been seen, devalues the local, presents a singular way of being in the world (exile), stresses a “fixity” to humanity, and opposes the particular with the universal. Rushdie’s most recent novel is therefore best situated alongside the extreme, or universal, cosmopolitanism of Nussbaum, that form Calhoun uses to juxtapose with Rushdie’s (previous) cultural cosmopolitanism. With *Enchantress* Rushdie’s position on Calhoun’s cosmopolitan spectrum relocates (though whether or not his new ideology will continue is yet to be seen).

Calhoun’s description of Rushdie’s (prior) cultural cosmopolitanism intimates the central role hybridity plays in this form, as is seen in Calhoun’s underlining the mixing, or “weaving,” of various localities and the plurality this produces in terms of culture and ways of being in the

world. It is Rushdie's consistent emphasis on and embodiment of hybridity which, for more than one theorist, has made him emblematic of a particular form of cosmopolitanism. In addition to Calhoun, Brennan cites this as one of the reasons why he focuses particularly on Rushdie out of a group of writers he calls the "Third-World cosmopolitans" in *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (1989). "Why Rushdie?" he asks. Among other factors:

[...] there was also the point that Rushdie's story had as much to do with England as with India and Pakistan. Thus, the 'in-betweenness' of the cosmopolitan – a creature, as Rushdie puts it, of 'translation' – was not only essentially there in his person but theoretically accounted for on every page of his work. (x)

Brennan explains that out of a group which includes, among others, Mario Vargas Llosa, Derek Walcott, Isabel Allende, Gabriel García Márquez, Bharati Mukherjee, "if there was any one of them who seemed to capture what they collectively represented, it was Rushdie" (viii).

As Brennan alluded, hybridity is central to any understanding of Rushdie's life and work, a fact about which critics have long since been writing, if without invoking the term *cosmopolitan* to do so. In *The Location of Culture*, a text in which Bhabha lays out his conception of hybridity, Bhabha entitles one of his chapters after Rushdie's phrase, "how newness enters the world," which might itself be used as one abbreviated description of hybridity. Here, as elsewhere, he uses Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* to explicate the related concepts of hybridity, translation, and postcolonial migration.²²

A significant end to which Rushdie has employed hybridity in his fiction and non-fiction writing is to interrogate the alleged issue of cultural impurity. There is a memorable scene in *The Satanic Verses* when Saladin Chamcha, who has metamorphosed into a goat/devil figure, has been hospitalized after being beaten by British police who refuse to believe he is an English citizen. Upon realizing he is sharing a room with many other previously black characters, who,

likewise, have transformed into hybrid human-animals, Chamcha asks one manticore-man how this lamentable phenomenon has occurred:

“But how do they do it?” Chamcha wanted to know.
“They describe us,” the other whispered solemnly. “That’s all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct.” (174)

The implication is that Anglo Britons have been identifying these immigrants as monsters, and in accepting these descriptions the immigrants become the mongrels they have been named. What I want to underline in this scene is the way it pulls together several issues that have motivated Rushdie’s engagement with hybridity. It foregrounds the seeming anomaly generated by the immigrant who is away from home, an anomaly that is predicated on two beliefs. The first is that one’s identity is wed to the location and culture of one’s birth. The second is that each culture is singular, isolated, and not to be polluted. It is the seeming problem of mixture, or hybridity, generated by these notions, that Rushdie’s celebratory embrace of mixture, through hybridity, will combat.

The Satanic Verses’s interrogation and violation of these sacralized cultural tenets, along with their religious counterparts, incited a threat on Rushdie’s life. In his essay “In Good Faith” Rushdie frames the *fatwa* as precisely the type of issue his novel counters, territorial ideologies opposed to hybridity:

Standing at the center of the novel is a group of characters most of whom are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim background, struggling with just the sort of great problems that have arisen to surround the book, problems of hybridization and ghettoization, of reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are of the opinion that intermingling with a different culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. (*Imaginary* 394)

Considering this essay alongside the scene with the goat-man Chamcha, it becomes evident that Rushdie has utilized hybridity to oppose the pressures of “ghettoization” issued from both sides of his identity, English as well as Muslim.

As this suggests, hybridity encompasses deeply personal issues for Rushdie. In addition to being imposed on him, the notion that identity must be attached to a singular point of origin is apparently an idea that Rushdie had to fight within himself. This is implicit in his short story from *East, West* entitled “The Courter,” a narrative encompassing autobiographical parallels. The young boy in the story is, like Rushdie, an Indian who has migrated to Britain, though in the story the boy moves with his family while Rushdie moved alone. At the end of the story, the boy receives his British passport, which he identifies as providing him with many material freedoms, but falling short of a significant, existential one, the freedom from having to decide between East and West:

But I, too, have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, *choose, choose*.

I buck, I snort, I whinny, I rear, I kick. Ropes, I do not choose between you. Lassoos, lariats, I choose neither of you, and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose. (211)

Corresponding to the literal choice between India and England which the boy’s Aya Mary makes, the boy senses an internal pressure to select one side. However, by the end of the story he has experienced a psychological turning point, whereby he realizes a third way: he “refuse[s] to choose” between East and West. The boy’s stance is reflected in this story’s placement within this collection. *East, West* is divided into three sections, “East,” then “West,” then “East, West.” “The Courter” is the last story in this last section, a position that makes a concluding statement about the East/West divide: Rushdie obstinately declares the possibility of the co-existence of East and West within a single text and, indeed, within a single person.

This refusal to choose characterized by the boy in this story is reflected in Rushdie's writing style, in its pronounced intertextuality for example. Rushdie declares in an essay from *Imaginary Homelands* that his own "polyglot family tree" shall "include Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville, Machado de Assis" (21). By insisting on the legitimacy of his and all Indo-British writers' ability to draw from various seemingly pure and separate literary, cultural, and national traditions, Rushdie forges a type of writing that for Bhabha is central to hybridity: it is "neither One or the Other but *something else besides*" (*Location* 219). In his writing stylistics, then, Rushdie enacts hybridity, aesthetically responding to enclosures of identity and belonging, a point Jaina Sanga articulates well:

Rushdie's writing is the epitome of postcolonial hybridity as it most obviously interposes different literary traditions. Hybridity in Rushdie's writing is not wholly innocent or merely gestural. What is significant is that the hybridity created by mixing, parodying, and borrowing is done at times in such a subversive manner, that it becomes a powerful form of resistance not only to Western epistemology but to the subcontinent's dominant ideologies as well. (77-78)

As Sanga touches on, Rushdie's intertextuality and the hybridity it represents functions to oppose exclusive ideologies from both hemispheric sides of East and West.

Rushdie comes to celebrate the purported problem of cultural mixture as an experience which should be embraced for its ability to generate newness. He ennobles the mongrelized condition as artistically fruitful, thereby transmogrifying the migrant monster into the productive artist:

Our [Indo-English writers'] identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. (*Imaginary* 15)

Hybridity becomes with Rushdie an aesthetic manifesto.

This brief overview of various highlights in Rushdie's oeuvre foregrounds what is for this study one of the most significant points of continuity among his prior work and his most recent,

namely the way that in *Enchantress* Rushdie maintains what has been a consistent enemy in his work, purisms, or the essentialist treatment of identity which restricts belonging to a singular and purportedly unpolluted culture inherited by birth. Rushdie calls attention to this continuous battle himself, when denouncing the danger of “what Indians call ‘communalism’, sectarian religious politics”: “I have fought against communal politics all my adult life” (*Imaginary* 404). However, while the object against which he has written remains consistent, Rushdie’s shift on the cosmopolitan spectrum from “cultural” to “extreme” cosmopolitanism with *Enchantress* reflects a shift away from hybridity as the key methodology through which he opposes enclosures of belonging, culture, identity, and place. With hybridity and “cultural cosmopolitanism,” Rushdie has opposed essentialist orthodoxies by arguing for the necessity and benefits of mixture, infinite ways world inhabitation, and the lack of “fixity” to humanity, as Calhoun put it. However, with universal (or Calhoun’s “extreme”) cosmopolitanism Rushdie contends with circumscribed identities and social solidarities by stressing the underlying commonality of humanity, and this at the expense of vernacular attachments, a combination which recommends a singular (exile) way of being in the world.

To undermine purisms through hybridity in the way Rushdie has done in the past is to do so by insisting upon mixture. Sanga explains this notion of hybridity:

Defined most simply, hybridity is the mixture produced when two or more elements are fused together. It is the process or the moment of homogenization when *dissimilar entities are combined and exist in complement with each other*. In terms of culture and contemporary representations of reality, hybridity involves *the mélange of an incongruous array of genders, classes, nationalities, religions, and ethnicities*. It implies *a syncretic view of the world in which the notion of the fixity or essentiality of identity is continually contested*. [emphasis added] (75-76)

Syncretism and *mélange*—hybridity—involve the amalgamation of various, distinct categories. This is a treatment of hybridity that fits within a historical theoretical context Pnina Werbner

describes as the reaction to “modernist theories that ground sociality in ordered and systematic categories; theories that analyze society as if it were bounded and ‘structured’ by ethical, normative dos and don’ts and by self-evident cultural truths and official discourses.” From this paradigm, she suggests, cultural hybridity contains a “transgressive power” in its mixture of these ostensibly authoritative categories (1).

This is an understanding of hybridity that might seem commonplace by now, yet it contains an important implication in terms of the shifts engendered by *Enchantress*. Hybridity as bricolage rests upon the notion that culture contains basic building blocks, or raw materials, as these are the necessary components for mixture. And in this, the aesthetic “hotchpotch” Rushdie creates does not dismiss culture, but esteems it, not in its purist invocations, but insofar as it recognizes both the inescapability of culture as well as the necessity of its components as the ingredients through which newness is formulated.

Saladin Chamcha will again provide a helpful illustration. Chamcha is an immigrant who is trying to sever himself from his past in Bombay while embracing an idolized and imagined Britishness, but his voice continually betrays him. When a stewardess on his flight asks him:

Something to drink, sir? A drink? [...] Saladin, emerging from the dream, found his speech unaccountably metamorphosed into the Bombay lilt he had so diligently (and so long ago!) unmade. “Achha, means what?” he mumbled. “Alcoholic beverage or what?” [...] “So, okay, bibi, give one whiskysoda only.”

What a nasty surprise! [...] How had the past bubbled up, in transmogrified vowels and vocab? What next? Would he take to putting coconut-oil in his hair? (34)

Chamcha’s carefully constructed English identity is defeated by the stubborn Indian remnants of his youth, family, and memories which he has tried to repress, only to find them ever submerged just beneath his consciousness. Chamcha’s struggle throughout the narrative involves the (difficult) fusion within a single individual of two particular cultures, Indian and English.

Though, again, it should be noted that the narrative problematizes any pure notion of either

identity so that Chamcha's being Indian involves his memories of what it is to be Indian as well as the expectations of other Indians (Zeeny and his father), while being English refers to his construction of what it means to be English as signified in his mythical invocation of Ellowen Deeowen (London). Still, *The Satanic Verses* imagines being and belonging as inescapably, if complexly, tethered to specific locales and people, and Chamcha's hybrid identity is a combination, or *mélange*, of precisely these components.

Enchantress does express aspects of just this type of hybridity. As JoAnn Conrad describes of the historical moment dramatized in this novel: "There was an inescapable hybridity and productivity to all these worlds—great movements of people, ideas, art, and knowledge brought about through violent conflict and conquest, but also by trade alliances, and pilgrimage" (434). The novel's form, magical realism, encompasses a hybrid intermixture of modalities—the combination of fantasy, or magic, and realism—as well as the confluence within magical realist lineage of philosophy, art history, literature, and film, as traced in the first chapter. Another overarching example of hybridity is the interweaving of Eastern and Western oral and written history in the creation of the novel, the combination of Machiavelli, Queen Elizabeth, and Amerigo Vespucci with Akbar and Birbal. At one moment in the narrative, Akbar's thoughts distinctly paraphrase the statements on hybridity quoted earlier from Rushdie's essay "In Good Faith":

Was foreignness itself a thing to be embraced as a revitalizing force bestowing bounty and success upon its adherents, or did it adulterate something essential in the individual and the society as a whole, did it initiate a process of decay which would end in an alienated, inauthentic death? (319)

Clearly, Rushdie does not abandon the employment of hybridity for literary content or device in *Enchantress*.

What I am concerned to pinpoint is the way *Enchantress*'s treatment of culture and its components represents a volte-face from his previous works, for instead of esteeming cultural building blocks as the necessary ingredients for hybrid forms of identity and belonging, this narrative disparages them by depicting that identity and location can be found outside of cultural components, and, what is more, by suggesting that they need to be avoided (though, again, it holds out little hope that people will be able to do so). Only one result can stem from this treatment of culture, a singular, exiled strategy of being and belonging. Rushdie's altered cosmopolitan methodology moves from suggesting a plurality of possible means of world inhabitation to an uncomfortably uniform model.

This raises some further theoretical concerns. If Rushdie's former hybrid methodology indicated his response to restrictive modernist categorizations, does *Enchantress*'s shift away from it, a shift in which "the human race" is pivotal, represent his reversion to those categories? There are two sequential reasons why I do not think this link can be facilely made. To begin, there are aspects of his methodology which align with significant contemporary attempts at recuperating human being and therefore cannot be simply seen as a naïve regression, and, following from this, the problematic aspects of Rushdie's cosmopolitan shift lie not in his assertion of universal humanity, but in his universalist cosmopolitan denigration of particularity.

Universalisms cannot be dismissed out of hand as former, debunked, and passé, while the rejection of them represent the common sense knowledge which has been now uncovered. This is a stance which overlooks significant contemporary embodiments of them which are aware of the shortcomings of previous universalist assertions as well as one of the outcomes stemming from them, cultural relativism. Amanda Anderson describes the recent development of

universalism among figures such as Etienne Balibar, Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Naomi Schor, and Joan Scott:

One of the more remarkable developments in contemporary cultural criticism has been the surge of interest in the idea and history of universalism, a concept that has frequently been viewed as unrecuperable by practitioners of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies more broadly. Partly in reaction to the excesses of identity politics, and partly in response to the political and ethical impasses of a strictly negative critique of Enlightenment, a number of theorists have begun to reexamine universalism, asking how we might best combine the critique of partial or false universals with the pursuit of those emancipatory ideals associated with traditional universalism. (“Cosmopolitanism” 265)

While Anderson is focusing specifically here on a revived universalism, Rushdie’s universal cosmopolitanism clearly bears resemblances to it insofar as it combines the ostensibly unrecoverable notion of an essentialist, universal human nature with a critique of identity enclosures.

Besides the universalist theorists Anderson lists, she also outlines “a belief in universal humanity” as one of three traits which most cosmopolitans share, the difference among them being the degree to which this characteristic (and each of the others) is stressed (“Cosmopolitanism” 267). In addition to universalists and cosmopolitans, there is a third group that represents not a revival of universalist ideals as much as a preserved tradition of it.²³ This is comprised of the anti- and postcolonial theorists, including Okri, I traced in chapter two when I described the way that these figures have maintained a humanist (and thus universalist) position in order to counter dehumanization and oppression.

Since universalist ideals are being recuperated and (re)asserted, and cannot therefore be brushed off as naïve and outmoded but instead reflect what is, perhaps, a move beyond bald anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism, *Enchantress*’s assertion of a common human race cannot be easily disregarded. Instead, the theoretical weakness reflected in *Enchantress* involves the way it pairs its humanism with a censure of particularist ties. This becomes apparent when one

considers that Rushdie might have extended a form of humanism without undermining local attachments, yielding a more palatable outcome, as Okri does in *Famished* (as well as in the tradition of West African humanism). In the latter narrative, the universal human fraternity is only achieved by care to vernacular natal ties. In this, Okri allows a common undercurrent of humanity which can nevertheless manifest in infinite varieties of identities, a kind of marrying of hybrid and universal cosmopolitans. This is the point at which *Enchantress* clearly differs not only from *Famished Road*'s humanism but also that of other cosmopolitan positions, which according to Anderson hold at least some belief in universal humanity, while allowing myriad ways of being and belonging.

In *Enchantress*, Rushdie seems, like Nussbaum, to have reacted too drastically to social circumscription, for the novel concludes at the other side of the pendulum, so to speak, in a view of cultural components that is pronouncedly disparaging, and this in spite of the fact that the narrative is dependent upon them in its historical and literary intertexts for example. Its low view of culture and its raw materials has been traced through its combining a universalist argument of fundamental similitude (represented by the replications in the second layer) with the prescription that characters escape the dangers of culture, that of their own and foreign ones (encompassed in the exile strategy of belonging of the third layer), in order to oppose purisms (seen in the first layer). As has been suggested, though, it is the extremeness of *Enchantress*'s cosmopolitan position that is at issue, a point which reminds of the narrative's evincing Rushdie's positional shift from cultural to "extreme cosmopolitanism."

Magical Realist Metamorphosis

Rushdie's relocation from a cosmopolitan position characterized by hybridity to universal cosmopolitanism is mirrored, to borrow *Enchantress*'s central motif, in his employment of

magical realist aesthetics, which functions differently in *Enchantress* than it has in his former novels. From early in his writing career, Rushdie has viewed magical realism as a convergence of opposing extremes. This may be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that this is how he understands García Márquez to use it. Brennan notes that “Rushdie spent the years of his apprenticeship during the rise of the Latin American ‘new novel,’” and García Márquez’s writing in particular had a considerable impact on him (*Salman* 61-62).

In Rushdie’s essay “Gabriel García Márquez” (1982), he describes the Latin American author’s use of magical realism as fusing together the two poles of old and new:

El realismo magical, magic realism, at least as practiced by Márquez, is a development out of Surrealism that expresses a genuinely ‘Third World’ consciousness. It deals with what Naipaul had called ‘half-made’ societies, in which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingly new [...]. (*Imaginary* 301)

In “Imaginary Homelands,” written the same year, Rushdie alludes to magical realism again, this time expanding on this idea of magical realism as a “mingling” of polarities:

As Richard Wright found long ago in America, black and white descriptions of society are no longer compatible. Fantasy, or the mingling of fantasy and naturalism, is one way of dealing with these problems. It offers a way of echoing in the form of our work the issues faced by all of us: how to build a new, ‘modern’ world out of an old, legend-haunted civilization, an old culture which we have brought into the heart of a newer one. (*Imaginary* 19)

The merging of opposites within magical realism, Rushdie suggests, reflects cultural encounter and hybridity resulting both from colonization in the so-called Third World, as he implies in the first passage, as well as from postcolonial people’s immigration to the metropolis, as he refers to in the second. The intermixture of “fantasy and naturalism,” or realism, in the magical realist modality parallels the intermixture of “old” and “new” cultures and their concomitant worldviews. This is a perspective commonly held by magical realist theorists. Faris describes that the mode’s “combination of realistic and fantastical narrative, together with the inclusion of

different cultural traditions, means that magical realism reflects, in both its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of much postcolonial society” (*Ordinary* 1).

Brenda Cooper expands on this further, while focusing specifically on formerly colonized locations, linking the cultural hybridity described by Rushdie and Faris to the social and economic characteristics of postcoloniality:

Linking socio-economic conditions and the rise of cultural forms is dangerous if applied too crudely and literally. Nonetheless, at the heart of the emergence of magical realism in the Third World is the fact that these countries encountered Western capitalism, technology and education haphazardly. Communications – road and rail – were set up where raw materials required transportation; elsewhere areas remained isolated and only indirectly transformed by new economies. Cities grew widely from rural origins, and families were divided between members who were Western-educated and those who remained inserted in pre-colonial economies and ways of seeing the world, with any number of positions in between these extremes. This social patchwork, dizzying in its cacophony of design, is the cloth from which the fictional magical carpet is cut, mapping not the limitless vistas of fantasy, but rather the new historical realities of those patchwork societies. (16)

Cooper’s explanation evokes Rushdie’s description of the magical realism of García Márquez and references aspects Rushdie would most certainly would have identified in the latter’s *One Hundred Years* when, for example, ice is first introduced to Macondo to the amazement of its inhabitants. A similar happening occurs in the Nigerian village depicted in Okri’s *Famished* when Madame Koto’s bar becomes the first location to have electricity, and all the villagers, who encounter spirits in their everyday lives, marvel at the magic of the light bulb. These narrative instances are more than moments of fusion, when the magical and the mundane are put on equal footing, but reflect “the new historical realities” of postcolonial “patchwork societies,” as Cooper describes them, as two divergent cultures come side by side.

The magical realist modality also reflects language issues related to postcolonial cultural hybridity, according to Stephen Slemon, who argues that the generic dialectic within magical realism expresses the linguistic, and thus ontological, clash that results from all forms of

colonization, “whatever its precise form”: “The magic realist text can be read as reflecting in its language of narration the real conditions of speech and cognition within the social relations of the postcolonial culture” (411). The meeting of languages and ontologies in postcolonial circumstances is represented in magical realism’s formal fusion of the two codes of magic and realism. The correlation between this modality and postcolonial language issues is seen in a different way in what Bishnupriya Ghosh describes as Rushdie’s employment of English vernacular in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, something she describes as “a localized or regionalized urban (Bombayite) use of English.” Rushdie utilizes English, a global language, in a way that requires “recourse to situated or contextual knowledges.” His English vernacular, then, reflects a “situated cultural hybridity” (“Invitation” 129-30). While this use of English does not require the magical realist modality, but could be employed in other modes, the point I mean to stress here is that magical realist texts often parallel, in their hybrid modality, various kinds of postcolonial linguistic fusions.

Magical realism’s modal, thematic, and linguistic expressions of postcolonial hybridity illustrate another way one might view the mode’s postcolonial politics as working together with the summational *modus operandi* of magical realism discussed in the first chapter in its ability to present representations of postcolonial experience. This suggests the import of magical realism in its having drawn attention to, even popularizing, a significant socio-historical dimension of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. At the same time, this utilization of the mode also entails the subversive *modus operandi* in the way it interrogates and destabilizes ideologies of homogeneity. As was seen in the preceding section, hybridity as a general methodology and concept effects this outcome, but because of the ways magical realism encompasses aspects of hybridity this mode becomes an aesthetic site wherein the interrogation of purisms is enacted. Lois Zamora and

Faris laud this aspect: “Magical realist texts are subversive: their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, a feature that has made the mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures and, increasingly, to women” (“Introduction” 6). Cooper also points to this subversive aspect of magical realism: “Hybridity, the celebration of ‘mongrelism’ as opposed to ethnic certainties, has been shown to be a fundamental aspect of magical realist writing.” She suggests, furthermore, that this is one of magical realism’s “set of devices that makes its [postcolonial] politics possible [...]” (32).

Zamora, Faris, and Cooper all give a nod to Rushdie in their uses of the terms *in-betweenness* and *mongrelism*, which is appropriate since this subversive function of the mode to which they point describes that aspect Rushdie has aesthetically harnessed to counter purisms. In fact, their association of this aspect with Rushdie demonstrates the crucial role he has played in developing the mode for this specific function. The lexicon these critics employ is likely derived from Rushdie’s now famous defense of what is probably his most (in)famous magical realist novel, *The Satanic Verses*:

The Satanic Verses celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolution of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that *is how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves. (*Imaginary* 394)

The Satanic Verses is a model example of Rushdie’s responding to “monologic structures” and “ethnic certainties” with hybridity, both thematically, as has been shown, and formally. What is additionally significant in light of this discussion is that Rushdie’s description here refers as much to the mode through which this narrative is told as it does to the content of the novel. He evokes all of the elements I have been detailing of this particular sense of magical realism:

“hybridity,” “unexpected combinations,” “migration,” and opposition to “the Pure.” This is important, because Rushdie’s confrontation of purisms is affected through both: the thematic and linguistic instances of hybridity, such as immigrant characters and intertextuality, as well as this hybrid modality. Furthermore, it is just this kind of compatibility among form and content, popularized by Rushdie, that has made magical realism such an attractive mode for many postcolonial scholars and critics.

This raises a vital question in light of the shifts indicated by Rushdie’s most recent novel. What happens when Rushdie employs the mode, as he does in *Enchantress*, not to aesthetically enact the subversive methodology of hybridity but universal cosmopolitanism? Not to express “cultural cosmopolitanism’s” infinite ways of being and belonging in the world, but a singular model of world inhabitation? Not to emphasize a hybrid confluence of “unexpected combinations,” as in *The Satanic Verses*, but to denigrate cultural building blocks and present a depiction of a basic similitude among what is only mistaken to be different societies and individuals, particularly among East and West? One need only recall the narrative magic associated with *Enchantress*’s title, Qara Kōz, the Mughal enchantress of Florence. It is her bewitching power which creates what Rushdie himself refers to as a fictional “bridge between the worlds,” and which is therefore largely responsible for demonstrating the profound similitude among East(erners) and West(erners) (“Authors”).²⁴ Rushdie’s divergent employment of magical realism in his most recent novel clearly carries implications for both domains of magical realism and postcolonialism. Does *Enchantress*’s shift from hybrid (or “cultural”) to universal (“extreme”) cosmopolitanism also shift the narrative away from postcoloniality and from the magical realist modality?

These questions are thorny and complex. The first one, which interrogates *Enchantress*'s relationship to postcoloniality, will not, admittedly, be responded to in any meaningful way here. Instead, I raise these two questions because I am after a different point, one for which presenting the way *Enchantress* problematically relates to both of them is sufficient. What I am concerned with here is the way the narrative's clearly altered postcolonial methodology (a la a subversive hybridity) calls into question its magical realist status. This is precisely what Cooper intimates in the quote mentioned earlier, when she asserts that the use of magical realism to express hybridity, or mongrelization, has become "fundamental" to the mode. This issue stems from the way the two elements of postcolonial politics and magical realist aesthetics have become deeply, even seemingly inseparably interrelated, so much so that they often seem to become one and the same thing. Answering affirmatively to one question (the narrative's magical realist aesthetics) is to also answer affirmatively to the other (regarding *Enchantress*'s particular type of postcolonial politics).

This gets to what I propose are aesthetically exciting and regenerative aspects of *Enchantress*'s shift to universal cosmopolitanism. I have suggested that, at a minimum, one can say that *Enchantress* relates complicatedly to postcolonial politics, inasmuch as the latter is understood as integrating hybridity and, thus, cultural differences and the value thereof. *Enchantress* clearly shifts away from this aesthetic-cum-political position of his former magical realist narratives. However, *Enchantress* is no less magical realist for this. The narrative meets the three minimal criteria of the mode, that explicated in Amaryll Chanady's tripartite definition presented in the first chapter: the presence of two antinomious codes of magic and realism; the resolution of logical antinomy between those codes; and authorial reticence concerning the supernatural. With *Enchantress*, Rushdie harnesses the mode's tools to different ends, though, as

has been shown in the first half of the chapter. In this, Rushdie implicitly recognizes the range of magical realism's functionality and reminds critics that the mode is aesthetically thin and cannot be restricted to any singular political deployment.

In a sense, Rushdie's contentious deployment of the mode reflects an additional point of continuity among his work (besides his continued battle against purisms), its tradition of blasphemy. Referencing Sara Suleri, Bhabha explains that Rushdie's blasphemy in *The Satanic Verses* is not merely a religious issue, "a misrepresentation of the sacred by the secular," but

Rushdie repeatedly uses the word "blasphemy" in the migrant sections of the book to indicate a theatrical form of the staging of cross-genre, cross-cultural identities. [...] it is a moment when the subject-matter or the content of a cultural tradition is being overwhelmed, or alienated, in the act of translation. Into the asserted authenticity or continuity of tradition, "secular" blasphemy releases a temporality that reveals the contingencies, even the incommensurabilities, involved in the process of social transformation. (*Location* 225-26)

Suleri herself describes Rushdie as "obsess[ed] with cultural trespass" (192). She further suggests that Rushdie has employed magical realism to this end: "[...] blasphemy must be apprehended as a narrative device rather than as a statement of religious conviction, as an aesthetic form that is indeed aligned to the structure of magic realism, or the favored shape of Rushdie's earlier novels" (201). While she does not expand on this, with her reference to "structure" Suleri seems to be implying that magical realism's intermixture of realism with the fantastic exemplifies generic transgression, or impurity. By comparing Rushdie's prior use of magical realism to blasphemy, though, Suleri also invokes the use of the mode as an expression of postcolonial hybridity, as Bhabha points to in Rushdie's secular blasphemy. In this light, Rushdie's use of magical realism is blasphemous in its depiction of the impurity represented by the immigrant who defies the "asserted authenticity or continuity of tradition," in Bhabha's words, as described earlier. However, *Enchantress* blasphemes against the model of magical

realist postcolonial blasphemy which he previously helped to forge, a double negation which may or may not lead one to question his position in relation to some kind of orthodox postcoloniality, but nevertheless does not place him outside the aesthetic fold of magical realism.

The shift in Rushdie's magical realism allows one to trace within the work of a single author (from Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, to *Shame*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and *Enchantress*) a development comparable to the mode's metamorphosis over at least the past sixty years. This does not mean that magical realism has, in general, taken a universalist cosmopolitan turn, but that the mode has historically been deployed in aesthetically blasphemous and even ideologically irreconcilable ways. Rushdie's corpus is in this way a microcosmic representation of the mode. Considered from this angle, Rushdie's *Enchantress* is no different than the magical realism of Anglo-British Angela Carter, which represents a violation of the territorialized Latin American magical realism developed by her aesthetic predecessors, Alejo Carpentier and García Márquez. It is precisely these moments of magical realist blasphemy, moreover, which have opened up and furthered the mode.

It is Rushdie himself who has played a key role in the transition of magical realism from a largely Latin American literary aesthetic to a generally postcolonial one, and now again he recognizes (whether consciously or not) the flexibility of the mode and directs it to new ends. There is a way in which this mutation of magical realism itself reflects the hybrid third space Bhabha celebrates, for by translating magical realism from its distinctly postcolonial context into a different zone, that of universal cosmopolitanism, he forges something new. *Enchantress's* magical realist unorthodoxy is thereby compatible with the critical project of this study, for it exemplifies the way the mode is flexible enough to adapt over time in order to accommodate divergent projects and historical moments and concerns.

In closing, *Enchantress* employs magical realism in a way that reflects a shift in Rushdie's ideological-aesthetic methodology. While this narrative works towards the same end as those magical realist texts which depended on hybridization, to destabilize purisms, its universal cosmopolitanism generates theoretical issues. This is seen most apparently in the way the narrative's prohibition of traditional forms of belonging creates a new dichotomization of identities, that of particularists and exiles, and so works against its pronounced task of "bridging" East(erners) and West(erners). The text upholds the very problems it attempts to counter, stringent identity categories and an Us/Them polarity. If *Enchantress* is weighed down with this theoretical conundrum, though, its reshaping of magical realist aesthetics and, thus, complication of critical paradigms is an undeniable success for the mode as it suggests the magical realism's potential to be deployed in fresh, even surprising, ways, thereby affirming the continuing capacity of magical realism as an aesthetic vehicle for contemporary concerns.

Conclusion:

Is Magical Realism Exhausted?

Literature and cosmopolitanism share a peculiar affinity. Amanda Anderson asserts a similar notion when she writes: “[...] the articulations of cosmopolitanism often occur [...] within genres more classically literary or eclectic: the essay, the autobiography, travel writing, and works of literature generally” (“Cosmopolitanism” 275).¹ Other critics, the author of this study included, share Anderson’s view. Over roughly the past twenty years (the same time period within which the recent theoretical revival of cosmopolitanism has occurred), references have been made to cosmopolitan authors, cosmopolitan literature and the cosmopolitan novel, cosmopolitan readers and a cosmopolitan reading practice, and cosmopolitanism as a literary critical rubric.²

What this recognized compatibility suggests is that narrative has something to offer the study of cosmopolitan theory. Indeed, Anderson implies one aspect here: “Cosmopolitanism generally invites a description from the perspective of the participant as he or she negotiates a dense array of affiliations and commitments” (“Cosmopolitanism” 275). This is a complex task, as David Hollinger illustrates well:

[...] most individuals live in many circles simultaneously and [...] the actual living of any individual life entails a shifting division of labor between the several ‘we’s’ of which the individual is a part. How much weight at what particular moments is assigned to the fact that one is Pennsylvania Dutch or Navajo relative to the weight assigned to the fact that one is also an American, a lawyer, a woman, a Republican, a Baptist, and a resident of Minneapolis? (*Postethnic* 106)

Whereas theory has the tendency of becoming disconnected from what Hollinger refers to here as “actual living,” narrative enfleshes cosmopolitan theory, offering a testing ground where such a difficult undertaking as handling plural “we’s,” or social solidarities, may or may not appear to readers cohesive, appealing, or resonant once embodied in characters and narrative arcs. Narrative is for this reason a key supplement to cosmopolitan theory.

The three previous chapters have explored the way *The Famished Road*, *Dreaming in Cuban*, and *The Enchantress of Florence* narratively enflesh concepts such as the formation of attachments and the navigation of belonging and being in the world, the same concepts which are also contemporaneously being discussed among cosmopolitan theorists. In chapter four we saw the way that *Enchantress*’s conflicting story elements indicated corresponding fissures within the universal cosmopolitan ideals its narrative constructs. The usage of character doubles to dramatize the similitude of the human race pulls against its character foiling to illustrate the need for difference. This polarization of the two strategies of belonging this juxtaposition encompasses, furthermore, recreates the East/West division against which its argument for humanity’s sameness is employed. In the plot, the inability of the exceptional characters to sustain exile from traditional forms of belonging intimates the corresponding inability of real persons to do the same. Considering narrative as a theoretical experiment, the aporias within *Enchantress*’s narratively comprised universal cosmopolitanism are beneficial to the cosmopolitan conversation, as they indicate weaknesses within universal cosmopolitanism’s theoretical incarnations, such as that espoused by Martha Nussbaum. As discussed in chapter four, Craig Calhoun has criticized Nussbaum’s theories precisely for the way they do not reflect the way people actually live, but it is the imaginative playing out of the abstract concepts of universal cosmopolitanism which make these limitations especially salient.

As is now apparent, this study interfaces cosmopolitanism with not just any literary genre or mode, but with magical realism, a fact which, in light of this present conversation, leads one to ask what this mode specifically offers the study of cosmopolitan theory. Is it coincidence that Ben Okri, Cristina García, and Salman Rushdie have (consciously or not) selected magical realism as the aesthetic through which to implicitly respond to Rushdie's question, cited at the beginning of this study, "how are we to live in the world" (*Imaginary* 17)? Or, rather, does magical realism furnish a unique set of tools through which to explore belonging and related ideas such as attachments, loyalties, identity, place, and meaning? I suggest the latter, and there are several magical realist features which we have seen at work in the previous chapters that demonstrate this.

First, in the subset of the summational *modus operandi* in which *Famished*, *Dreaming*, and *Enchantress* fit, the construction of cosmopolitan maps of belonging, narrative magic has functioned as presence. Magical phenomena have made present, and thus forced readerly attention upon, issues related to being in the world. In each of these narratives, the conspicuousness and actual existence within the narrative world of fantastical elements draw attention to how belonging might or might not be forged. *Enchantress*'s Jodha is a memorable example of the latter, as the limitations on her marvelous existence and perspective of others literalize the narrative's representation of the particularist strategy of belonging.

Second, while many narratives imagine the world as it might be (or have been), magical realism's ability to simultaneously convey both the real and the supra-real allows narratives filtered through this aesthetic to represent belonging in a broad spectrum unavailable to "unidimensional" narratives, as Amaryll Chanady refers to those which depict only one "level of reality" (*Magical* 7). Realist narratives, for example, stay closed off to the transcendent, while, at

the other extreme, modal fantasy remains once-removed from reality, as it depicts a world other than the reader's. In contrast, magical realism brings the transcendent and the real together in a hybrid copresence and is thereby able to illustrate what belonging and being in the real world feels like, its phenomenological and spiritual components. Examples of this were seen in *Dreaming* when Lourdes and her father maintain a relational closeness even after Jorge's death, and in *Famished* when the attachments to human family and community of the abiku Azaro are presented as exceedingly difficult to maintain, an aspect conveyed through Okri's employment of the abiku trope but one which also suggests the gritty reality of a person born into extreme poverty and political oppression.

As this last point calls to mind, on the other side of the spectrum from the supra-real is these narratives' rootedness in reality. Wendy Faris refers to this feature as magical realism's "historical anchoring": "But history is the weight that tethers the balloon of magic [...]" (*Ordinary* 16). In contrast to being escapist, this aspect allows the "bidimensional" structure of magical realist tales to retain a pointedness in their illustration of concerns which permeate the world inhabited by the reader. This is an aspect that has been recognized and maximized upon in the mode's historically crucial postcolonial usages. What this means for cosmopolitan theory is that magical realism, though infused with the supra-real, can be utilized to explore not only the extratextual issue of belonging, but also real issues which might hinder or buttress it: besides the poverty shown in *Famished*, there is xenophobia and geo-political and/or cultural egocentrism as illustrated in *Enchantress*, and paternalistic History and politics as shown in *Dreaming*.

A third and final benefit of magical realism as a unique literary modality through which to examine cosmopolitan topos is attributable to the way it is aesthetically thin enough to structure diverse, and even divergent, representations of theoretical issues. This means that not only is the

mode able to convey contrasting viewpoints within the broad ambit of the cosmopolitan conversation, universalist positions as well as cosmopolitan patriotism, but, more informally, it is able to trace cosmopolitan concerns in various trajectories. *Famished*, *Dreaming*, and *Enchantress* differ widely in the ways they strategize belonging: Okri's narrative conveys a vernacular humanism, García's an emphasis on the stubbornness of bonds within the family nexus, while Rushdie's illustrates universal cosmopolitanism. Of course, these narratives converge at certain points, such as *Famished Road*'s and *Dreaming*'s comparable stressing of the role of communities of descent in the forging of self-amidst-world. Nevertheless, their narrative domains remain unique from each other in, for example, the way they envision belonging's outcome, structure values hierarchies, and illustrate the role played by the accidents of birth.

If magical realist narratives facilitate cosmopolitan theory by offering a distinctive means of engaging with concepts considered the domain of cosmopolitanism, the reverse might also be said. Cosmopolitan theory furthers the study of magical realism. As seen in the previous chapters, the former has offered an elucidating set of lenses through which to analyze *Famished*, *Dreaming*, and *Enchantress*, highlighting and organizing significant thematic and aesthetic aspects of these narratives, particularly the way each harnesses the inter-working codes of magic and realism to plot distinctive maps of belonging and being in the world.

The discovery of this central element, furthermore, critically informs magical realist theory, as it refutes the predominant theoretical paradigm which understands the mode as limited to a deconstructive poetic, wherein magic functions solely to unsettle and subvert. *Famished*, *Dreaming*, and *Enchantress*'s strategies of belonging demonstrate the mode's constructive capacity, a function likely to be obscured behind this particularist framework.³ Because cosmopolitan mapping is only one of numerous diverse operations towards which magical

realism's two codes could be utilized, not to mention the additional summational capacities including the presentation of alternative worldviews, the construction of nationalist or philosophical ideals, and cultural (re)construction, these additional aspects, too, are likely to go undetected by such a restricted paradigm.

Also at risk due to the particularist, deconstructive hermeneutic is magical realism's perceived future. Should this paradigm win the day, the mode will be seen to have now reached a point of exhaustion, and this just three decades after John Barth includes examples of it within his discussion of a potential "replenishment" offered to an "exhausted" state of literature (71).⁴ Magical realism will seem analogous to Rushdie's Mughal princess, Qara Köz, whose potent powers of bewitchment, after initially being capable of enchanting entire regions of people (or, in this case, readers), finally prove momentary and fleeting. The postness of magical realism, however, need not yet be posited. If magical realism appears expended, this stems from an erroneous view rather than the aesthetic composition of magical realist narratives themselves. As long as critics (or authors) approach magical realist narratives with the formulaic interpretation wherein narrative magic effects postcolonialist and/or postmodernist resistance against a monolithic North/West, the mode will indeed appear dated. Existing narratives will seem already read, or critically mined of what they had to offer. Moreover, authors who might otherwise, in the future, harness the mode to ends other than this, if falsely understanding magical realism as exclusively functioning in this capacity, will pass over a seemingly closed narrative modality.

On the other hand, if the mode is appropriately viewed as versatile, a vehicle able to carry diverse, even internally conflicted idea(l)s as it has done in the mode's history (as the shift from the first to the second García shows) and continues to be done today (as Rushdie's *Enchantress* demonstrates), then magical realism's future, both in terms of the crafting of new narratives and

the rereading of old, will be seen as open, a site within which there is still work to be done. A critical understanding of the mode's malleability has the potential of prompting innovative approaches to magical realist fiction and criticism, allowing new questions to be posed and insights gleaned from texts spanning the magical realist timeline. It is therefore crucial for the mode that this hermeneutical framework is expanded to include the scope of magical realism's functional capacities.

The question of narrative magic's functionality, the range of its possible deployment, will usefully be placed back on the theoretical table, then, as will the other questions with which I began this study, questions central to magical realist hermeneutics: what are the implications of magical realism; what might it mean for a narrative to be written in this modality; how do we as readers and critics interpret its conspicuous magic? Consistent with the history of magical realism's deployment, this study suggests viewing the mode as broad and thin: broad in the usages to which it has been applied over the last sixty-plus years and thin in its minimal aesthetic requirements which thus allows it to be deployed to various ends. Magical realism is able to construct as well as deconstruct, promote ideas from the left and from the right, structure diverse and internally divergent projects. The ways the novels studied here defy common magical realist critical paradigms suggest that Rushdie, García, and Okri, at least, have already realized this.

Notes

Chapter One

¹ *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) 6.

² There is critical debate over whether or not the painting and literary magical realisms should be separated completely. Kenneth Reeds is one critic who insists on keeping Roh's position within the magical realist genealogy, "Magical Realism: A Problem of Definition," *Neophilologus* 90.2 (2006): 175-96.

³ 1949 is also the year of publication for Miguel Ángel Asturias' *Men of Maize* (*Hombres de Maíz*), a novel often included in magical realist genealogies.

⁴ Numerous pieces magical realist literature have been adapted to film and theater. Examples of the former category are William Kennedy's novel *Ironweed* which was released in 1987, Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* in 1993, Joanne Harris's *Chocolat* in 2000, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" in 2008. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is also scheduled to begin its film adaptation in 2010, Denis Seguin, "Rushdie's 'Unfilmable *Midnight's Children* Heads for the Silver Screen," 7 November 2008, *The Guardian*, 12 Feb. 2010 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/nv/07/midnights-children-film>>.

Frederick Luis Aldama cites magical realist films *El Norte* (1983), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), and *A Walk in the Clouds* (1995), *Postethnic Narrative Criticism: Magicorealism in Oscar "Zeta" Acosta, Ana Castillo, Julie Dash, Hanif Kureishi, and Salman Rushdie* (Austin: U of Texas P, 2003) 15-16. Wendy Faris mentions, in addition to some of the films already listed here, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Field of Dreams*, *Wolf*, *Thinner*, and *Woman on Top*, *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2004) 29.

Additionally, while magical realist literature has been overwhelmingly considered the domain of prose, the magical realist poetry of Joe Rosenblatt is analyzed by Alfredo Rizzardi in "Bewildered with Nature: The Magical-Realist in Joe Rosenblatt," *Coterminous Worlds: Magical Realism and Contemporary Post-Colonial Literature in English*, eds. Elsa Linguanti, Francesco Casotti, and Carmen Concilio (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999) 125-37.

⁵ Here I am applying Carpentier's idea about *lo real maravilloso* and the baroque to magical realism generally. Carpentier himself explicitly distinguishes Roh's magical realism from the marvelous real on the basis that the former is a German painting movement and the latter a distinctly Latin American phenomenon; however, I see Carpentier's *lo real maravilloso* as a branch belonging to the wider tree of magical realism, "The Baroque and the Marvelous Real," *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 102-04.

⁶ Aldama identifies this debate in order to demonstrate that the pervasive ethnopoetic approach to magical realism confuses the literary text with the empirical world: "One of the reasons why magical realism remains a heated subject for scholarly study and debate is the long history (especially through the last half of the twentieth century) of confusing its literary and ethnographic components. Since the mid-twentieth-century writings of Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Asturias, there has been a conflation of the literary form with ethnographic content: a confusion of narrative with ontology," 2. One reason he develops the term *magicorealism*, with which he titles his book, is to signify "a new study [which] is careful not to confuse the

transcription of the real world, where the criteria of truth and falsity apply, with the narrative mode governed by other criteria,” 15.

⁷ Erik Camayd-Freixas frames Flores and Leal’s famous magical realist debate as one also pivoting around this issue, contrasting Flores’ formalist paradigm with Leal’s thematic one, “Reflections on Magical Realism: A Return to Legitimacy, the Legitimacy of Return,” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 23:2 (1996): 580-89. See also Flores, “Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction (1955),” Zamora and Faris, 109-17; Leal, “Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature,” Zamora and Faris, 119-24.

⁸ In making this point, I have benefited from (and adapted) Chanady’s and Ouyang’s arguments. In 1985, Chanady observes of early, Latin American magical realism: “The presence of the supernatural is often attributed to the primitive or ‘magical’ Indian mentality, which coexists with European rationality,” *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy* (New York: Garland, 1985) 19. Ouyang similarly, though more extensively, describes the way magical realism is viewed due to a Latin American framework: “Magic is derived from the ‘supernatural’ elements of ‘local’ or ‘indigenous’ myths, religions, or cultures that speak directly to the imposition of Christianity in addition to post-Enlightenment empiricism on the ‘natives’ of South America.” However, when Ouyang makes this observation about twenty years following Chanady, she is contending that this Latin American paradigm “seem[s] to have found universal sympathy,” by which she means that it has been applied too broadly to the now international presence of the mode, so new potential critical insights are obstructed, “Magical Realism and Beyond: Ideology of Fantasy,” *A Companion to Magical Realism*, eds. Stephen Hart and Wen-chin Ouyang (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2005) 16.

⁹ Irene Guenther and Lois Parkinson Zamora address Novalis’ original role in magical realist theory. See Guenther’s “Magical Realism, New Objectivity, and the Arts during the Weimar Republic,” Zamora and Faris 34; Zamora “Swords and Silver Rings: Magical Objects in the Work of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez,” Hart and Ouyang 28-29. Warnes expounds further than either Guenther or Zamora on this relationship in his book, *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2009) 19-29.

Camayd-Freixas notes the vast number of additional magical realist antecedents addressed in Zamora and Faris’s anthology: “Cervantes, Faulkner, Gogol, Hoffmann, James, Kafka, Scheherezade, Stendhal, and Stern,” 580. Works of fiction from many of these same authors had been anthologized in a previous book by David Young and Keith Hollaman, *Magical Realist Fiction: An Anthology*, eds. David Young and Keith Hollaman (New York: Longman, 1984).

¹⁰ For an argument regarding why García Márquez’s novel and not Grass’s earned worldwide recognition, see Aldama 115, n. 1.

Both the Latin American boom writers and Grass made an impact of Rushdie, an author whose contributions to magical realism can hardly be overstated. See Rushdie’s essays on Grass and García Márquez in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91* (London: Granta, 1991) 273-83, 299-307.

¹¹ Jean-Pierre Durix questions the notion of a pure indigenous resource for magic: “Much of this literature – at least in its Latin American form – originates in a ‘Criollo’ environment, that is in the upper layers of society whose natural leanings brought the people closer to European culture than to popular belief.” At the same time, Durix concedes that, at least in Carpentier and Asturias, “native resources” were “tap[ped]” in order “to offer an alternative to the still largely

dominant culture of the former metropolis,” *Mimesis, Genres and Post-Colonial Discourse: Deconstructing Magic Realism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998) 115-16.

¹² Frank Janney identifies the old black man (“*el negro viejo*”) at the beginning of the narrative as the Afro-Cuban servant Melchor, *Alejo Carpentier and His Early Works* (London: Tamesis, 1980) 90.

¹³ Chanady’s examples of antipositivistic writing date from 1900 to 1950, “The Territorialization of the Imaginary in Latin American Fiction: Self-Affirmation and Resistance to Metropolitan Paradigms,” Zamora and Faris, 135.

¹⁴ Roberto González Echevarría gives an extratextual, political explanation for magical realism’s popular Latin American flowering, “The widespread use of the concept stems from its being part of a question that goes beyond literature: the question about the place of the New World in the scheme of universal history, stemming from the dissemination of the works of Hegel and Spengler in Spanish,” *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977) 108-09.

¹⁵ Brennan affirms this in Rushdie: “[...] Rushdie spent the years of his apprenticeship during the rise of the Latin American ‘new novel’, whose influence and authority – particularly, of course, that of García Márquez – suggested what his [...] political memoir, *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey* finally proves: his search for reference points within Latin American decolonization [...],” *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (New York: St. Martin P, 1989) 61-62.

¹⁶ Warnes describes both authors as employing “irreverent” magical realism. One of two types of magical realism he identifies, this kind interrogates “the assumptions of the causal,” or scientific, “paradigm,” 12, 48. Of García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Warnes explains: “This kind of skepticism about literature, about conventional understandings of the ways language functions, linked to an awareness of marginality and oppression is a key element of what I am labeling irreverence – an approach which chooses to play games with the conventions of representation in order to subvert assumed truth and establish opposition to dogma or power,” 92.

¹⁷ Demonstrating these aspects in Sam Watson’s *The Kadaitcha Sung* (1990), Baker specifically draws attention to the benefits of magical realism for Australian Aboriginals who are intervening in contemporary issues by returning to “traditional Aboriginal culture,” “Magic Realism as a Postcolonial Strategy,” *SPAN* 32 (1991): 56.

¹⁸ *The Satanic Verses* is a polemical novel which has been interpreted in myriad ways. In addition to being seen as blasphemous, Rushdie contends in his infamous response to the novel, “In Good Faith,” that the narrative also takes seriously the need of some for faith. Through Gibreel Farishta the novel “portray[s] a soul in crisis, to show how the loss of God can destroy a man’s life,” *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91* (London: Granta, 1991) 397-99.

¹⁹ Durix suggests another, and less optimistic, reason for this. The term *magical realism* “came into common usage in the late 1960s, a time when intellectuals and literary critics were often involved in Third-Worldism, civil rights and anti-imperialistic protests. Perhaps the success of the term reflects the demand of this captive audience as much as the necessities of the environment in which the writers were working,” 116.

²⁰ While Slemon demonstrates how particular ways of understanding magical realism had been carried over from Latin America, he is, at the same time, working to widen magical realist

parameters from Third World postcolonials to their First World counterparts and thereby demonstrate the “continuities [...] between present-day magic realist texts and apparently very different texts written at earlier stages of a culture’s literary history,” “Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse,” Zamora and Faris 409. Reeds also underlines that Slemon “showed the versatility of the term when wielded within the analysis of Post-Colonialism,” 191. In this way, Slemon anticipates the hermeneutical expansion with which this study is concerned.

²¹ In his article, Slemon focuses on Kroetch’s and Hodgins’ narratives, but he also lists the postcolonial thematics involved in English-Canadian novels *Middlewatch* by Susan Kerslake and *Two-Strand River* by Keith Maillard, 409.

On Malouf as a magical realist see Carmen Concilio, “The Magic of Language in the Novels of Patrick White and David Malouf,” Linguanti, Casotti, and Concilio, 29-45.

²² There is one moment when D’haen does hint at an offensive, constructive function of magical realism, when he describes that its authors “appropriat[e] the techniques” of the center in order to “create an alternative world correcting so-called existing reality, and thus to right the wrongs this ‘reality’ depends upon”; however, he does not elaborate on this, “Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers,” Zamora and Faris, 195.

²³ Ouyang is referencing López’s *Posts and Pasts: A Theory of Postcolonialism* (Albany: State U of New York P, 2001).

²⁴ That magical realism has historically encompassed divergent political positions is also reflected in the painting side of the movement. While Roh termed the new German painting *Magischer Realismus*, or *magical realism*, Gustav Hartlaub used the alternative (and more popular) term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, New Objectivity, the latter group of artists being subdivided into Neoclassicists and Verists. Reeds records of the Neoclassicists, “once Hitler came to power some of these artists became Nazi propagandists and one in particular, Adolf Ziegler, was named president of the Third Reich’s Chamber of the Fine Arts and counted among Hitler’s favorites.” In contrast, many Verists “became politically active in Germany’s Community party, the KPD [...]” After Hitler took charge of the nation, “their art was often declared to be ‘degenerate’ and in the worst cases, it was burnt.” In 1933 Roh himself was sent to the Dachau concentration camp, 179.

²⁵ Rushdie suggests a similar understanding of the mode, its juxtaposition of two elements normally seen as opposites, when he describes: “[Magic realism] deals with what Naipaul has called ‘half-made’ societies, in which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingly new [...],” *Imaginary* 301. In the same way, Young and Hollaman explain magical realism as “a colliding of cultures, one ‘primitive’ [...] the other ‘civilized’ and presumably ‘realistic’ [...]” However, this collision can also function metaphorically, they submit, “as when the coexistence of childhood and adulthood is suddenly revealed to us [...], or when the interpretation of life and death [...] is exposed,” 3-4.

²⁶ I have adapted the phrase moment of fusion from a point made by Chanady. She describes that in *One Hundred Years* when Remedios la bella’s ascension is told in a “matter-of-fact way,” “the focalizer places a supernatural event on the same level as an ordinary occurrence, and the narrative voice fuses the two levels (the logically impossible ascension and the prosaic washing of the line),” *Magical* 36.

²⁷ With the term “bidimensionality” Chanady is drawing off of Max Lüthi, who uses it to distinguish between fairy tale and legend, *Magical* 7.

²⁸ Warnes notes that critics are “in broad agreement about the crucial issue of definition”: none “diverge substantially from Chanady’s 1985 account of the key attributes of magical realism,” 5. As I am trying to outline here, though, I think there remains confusion over definitions of the mode, and its key attributes, and the way the two codes might be made to interact in any given text.

²⁹ Chanady self-consciously expands the parameters of her definition beyond thematic constraints. She describes the popular conception that magical realism combines “reality, or a world with which the author is familiar” and “the myths and superstitions of the American Indians”: “The themes treated in magico-realist narrative are often a more important criterion than style or structure, and authors are frequently excluded from the category because their stories or novels are set in large urban centers rather than amongst the American natives,” 19. In contrast, she argues: “Although magical realism usually shows us a world view that is dominant in a specific culture, or inherited from earlier generations, it would restrict the concept unnecessarily to establish this as a criterion,” *Magical* 22. While Chanady is contending with the alleged requirement of indigenous resources for magic, the primary thematic issue(s) with which I am engaging are the purported required politics of the mode as well as the deconstructive effect, or function, of magic. Narrative magic’s ambit is much wider than these limited extratextual rubrics allow.

³⁰ This study is not the first to recognize the need for and work towards distinctions within magical realist texts. Jeanne Delbaere-Garant argued that “there has been a tendency in recent debates, especially after Stephen Slemon’s influential article [...], to systematically consider the concept of magical realism ‘in its specific engagement with postcoloniality,’” 249. She then identifies three categories of magical realist variants—psychic, mythic, and grotesque realism—which she uses to tease out nuances in the sources and effects of different narratives’ magic. She creates these categories in an attempt to “help to situate any contemporary magic realist text, or part of a text, more accurately in a larger conceptual and terminological constellation,” rather than lumping all texts with magical realist characteristics under the very broad, yet at times analytically restrictive, category of postcolonialism, “Psychic Realism, Mythic Realism, Grotesque Realism: Variations on Magic Realism in Contemporary Literature in English,” Zamora and Faris, 250. Pietro Deandrea questions the need for a distinction among the mode’s “different strains,” although he retains the common term *magical realism*, *Fertile Crossings: Metamorphoses of Genre in Anglophone West African Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002) 35. Faris’s and Ouyang’s complaints about the limited view of magical realist aesthetics imply this need. Warnes develops an argument for two “types” or “strands” of magical realism, faith and irreverence, 3, 13. Using the language of magical realist critics themselves, I create a different list of types. In my rubric, Warnes’ faith category fits within my category of summation. The (re)construction of worldviews is one of several ways I identify that narrative magic might add to reality. His category of irreverence corresponds with what I call subversion. Warnes also notes in his study, “The idea that there might be different types of magical realism is one that has been around for some time – at least since Roberto González Echevarría’s study of Alejo Carpentier, published in 1974 – but has never been fully developed,” 13.

³¹ Slemon also provides two other ways magical realism’s “thematic structure” parallels its “language of narration”: 1) “transformational regionalism”: “the site of the text [...] is metonymic of the postcolonial culture as a whole”; 2) “the foreshortening of history”: “the time scheme of the novel metaphorically contains the long process of colonization and its aftermath,”

411. I am interested, though, in the relationship between the ways the two codes interact and the mode's potential thematics.

³² Magical realism encompasses a complex relationship to mimesis. On one hand, the narrative incorporates (opposing and utilizing) literary realism, a mode purporting mimetic qualities, while on the other, the inclusion of the supernatural itself suggests a mimetic capacity, though one able to convey a fuller picture of reality, or more accurately fulfill a mimetic role.

³³ Faris cites the source of Allende's quote as "The Shaman and the Infidel," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 8.1 (1991): 54.

³⁴ For this concept Simpkins develops Robert Scholes' analysis of Borges, "Sources of Magic Realism/Supplements to Realism in Contemporary Latin American Literature," Zamora and Faris, 152.

³⁵ Faris also lists this as one of five primary characteristics of magical realist literature: "Magical realism disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity," *Ordinary* 7.

³⁶ Faris has also referred to magical realism as replenishment, though the context in which she uses this descriptor does not fit within the framework I am sketching here, which is how the code of magic is made to interact with realism. She is referring to Barth while describing the way magical realism, as a postmodern aesthetic, replenishes literature after modernism, *Ordinary* 29. See also Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction," *The Atlantic* 245.1 (1980): 65-71.

³⁷ While making this point, Okri is also trying to distance himself from magical realism; however, I situate Okri within magical realism, and even more specifically in the tradition of *lo real maravilloso*, as discussed in chapter two.

³⁸ Warnes anticipates a connection I draw between magical realism's capacity to construct cultural aspects when he writes: "[...] magical realism of this [faith-based] kind seeks to reclaim what has been lost: knowledge, values, traditions, ways of seeing, beliefs," 12. He suggests this connection again here: "The ontologies I will be discussing in my comments on faith-based magical realism are collective—they are ways of understanding cultural being-in-the-world," 13.

³⁹ In Zamora's "Magical Realism/Magical Romance: Ghosts in U.S. and Latin American Fiction," she examines instances when ghosts in Latin American fiction are used towards a cultural function: "Goyen, Garro and Rulfo embody earth as a sedimentation of cultures, as a stratification of the living remains of ancient peoples," Zamora and Faris, 527. Kathleen Brogan also analyzes the way ghosts perform a cultural task, though her concern is not magical realism but what she identifies as the contemporary, ethnic American ghost story. According to Brogan, these narratives of "cultural haunting" work to "recover and make social use of a poorly documented, partially erased cultural history," "American Stories of Cultural Haunting: Tales of Heirs and Ethnographers," *College English* 57.2 (1995): 149-50. As I do, Brogan includes García's *Dreaming in Cuban* in her study.

⁴⁰ One cannot make a hard distinction between Achebe's realism and magical realism, the following issue suggests. Like Mathuray, Durix distinguishes Achebe's realism from European realism, describing that Achebe includes cultural details not merely to create verisimilitude, but "to wrench a whole culture of out oblivion," 63. Curiously, though, Durix uses Achebe's detailing of the Ibo and Umuofia people in *Arrow of God* as his example. The generic classification of this quintessentially African realist text would usefully be re-considered in light of magical realism, however, because of several instances of supernatural intervention into the

narrative's realist framework: the moment Obika returns having seen the spirit Eru, 9-10; the knocking of Ezeulu's unseen staff heard by the village women, 87; and the moment Ulu speaks to Ezeulu, 240-41; *The Arrow of God* (London: Heinemann, 1964). Mathuray actually cites this last example as a "magical realist" moment in the text." However, he contends that "this moment, which poses a problem of classification, is resolved through thematic recuperation [...]," "Realizing the Sacred: Power and Meaning in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*," *Research in African Literatures* 34.3 (2003): 61.

⁴¹ I have developed the term strategies of belonging after coming across it in Stuart Hall. Concerned specifically with the "strategies of belongingness and identification" at the local and national levels, Hall states: "[...] communities and societies are increasingly multiple in their nature. [...] They are composed of communities with different origins, drawing on different traditions, coming from different places, obliged to make a life together within the confines still of a fixed territorial boundary or space while acknowledging that they are making a common life, not living a form of apartheid or separatism. They want, nevertheless, to retain in some sense the distinctiveness of their historical roots in the place in which they have ended up," "Political Belonging in a World of Multiple Identities," *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, eds. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 25. While Hall is using *strategies* to refer to a specific challenge, the issues of belonging and identity engendered by cultural multiplicity, I use am concerned with how these narratives' strategies might respond to myriad challenges to belonging.

⁴² The phrase communities of descent, as well as the corresponding communities of consent, is David Hollinger's, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995) 7, 13.

⁴³ Craig Calhoun suggests this relationship between "social solidarity—and its individual manifestation in a sense of belonging in specific cultural and social settings," "'Belonging' in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary," *Ethnicities* 3 (2003): 532. Hollinger himself defines it this way: "Solidarity is an experience of willed affiliation." It "denote[s] a state of social existence" and emphasizes "conscious commitment, even if that commitment is inspired by inherited expectations." People among whom there is solidarity are "disposed to act together," *Cosmopolitanism and Solidarity: Studies in Ethnoracial, Religious, and Professional Affiliation in the United States* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2006) xi. Here Hollinger is contrasting solidarity with the term *community*.

⁴⁴ Gustavo Pérez Firmat coins this phrase, which is also the name of one his books, to refer to Cuban-Americans, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1994).

⁴⁵ Vertovec and Cohen's introduction very helpfully outlines the range of the cosmopolitan discourse, 1-22.

⁴⁶ Brennan drew attention to the connection between Rushdie and cosmopolitanism in 1989 in his book-length work on Rushdie.

Chapter Two

¹ The first quote is from an impromptu speech Dad is making in Madame Koto's bar while trying to convince people to vote for him instead of politicians from the other two corrupt parties, *Songs of Enchantment* (London: Vintage, 2003) 127. The second is from Ernest Renan's "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" in *Nationalism*, eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) 17.

² As will be discussed at length in the final section of this chapter, there is critical debate about whether or not magical realism is an appropriate literary category for *Famished*. However, I situate the narrative within this aesthetic and, more specifically, within a particular branch of magical realism, *lo real maravilloso*.

³ José Santiago Fernández Vázquez analyzes *Famished* in relation to the *Bildungsroman* in “Recharting the Geography of Genre: Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* as a Postcolonial Bildungsroman,” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 37 (2002): 85-106. Also, Quayson refers specifically to Dad’s development as his “rite of passage,” a description which suggests the *Bildungsroman*, *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing: Orality and History in the Work of Rev. Samuel Johnson, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka & Ben Okri* (Oxford: James Currey, 1997) 141. Finally, Maurice O’Connor touches on Okri’s usages of the *Bildungsroman* in numerous narratives, including *Famished*, *The Writings of Ben Okri: Transcending the Local and the National* (New Delhi: Prestige, 2008).

⁴ While different attempts have been made to identify the resource for *Famished Road*’s King figure, Esther de Bruijn argues: “[...] the point is that [the king’s] source is not clear, and it could be as easily be Yoruba as Christian as New Age spirituality—or that, more likely, it is a hybrid creation of any of the above,” “Coming to Terms with New Ageist Contamination: Cosmopolitanism in Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road*,” *Research in African Literatures* 38.4 (2007): 174.

⁵ *Famished Road*’s insistence upon characters’ having a choice in all situations provides a node of intersection with Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialist humanism. As Martin Halliwell and Andy Mousley explain, according to Sartre, “[...] freedom remains a defining feature of existence because the individual remains at liberty to act even in the most trying circumstances [...]. This understanding is at the heart of Sartre’s humanism, in which free choice transcends any situation in which one may find oneself (although Fanon would argue that this is unlikely to be the case for the slave or captive),” *Critical Humanisms: Humanist/Anti-Humanist Dialogues* (Edinburgh: U of Edinburgh P, 2003) 45.

⁶ I disagree with de Bruijn’s reading of this scene to conclude that Heaven is an “inconsequential” entity, “It is inconsequential, the spirit infers, whether heaven truly exists or not,” 173. In this scene in the narrative, Okri seems to clearly be drawing off the notion of Heaven being a place in which a person would want to be, as the narrative’s multiple moments of inversion depend upon this concept.

⁷ Quayson defines animism as “the belief in a spiritual vitality lying behind all natural objects,” *Strategic* 148.

⁸ Deandrea argues that Azaro diverges from other writers’ treatments of the abiku because of the narrative structure in which he is depicted, “Okri’s use of the abiku differs from his predecessors’ inasmuch as he founds his magical-realist style with its coexistence of rational reality and spirit-world on Azaro’s first-person narration, since the child’s contact with his original place is never severed and his perceptions therefore constantly touch on both dimensions at the same time,” 49.

Azaro also differs from the torment bearing abiku in Okri’s poem “The Political Abiku” published in a collection that came out around the same time as *The Famished Road, An African Elegy* (London: Vintage: 1992).

⁹ Douglas McCabe argues counter to Soliman’s conclusion on Soyinka’s traditional treatment of the abiku in “History of Errancy: Oral Yoruba *Abikú* and Soyinka’s ‘Abiku,’”

Research in African Literatures 33.1 (2002): 45–74.

¹⁰ My reading of the Photographer, and of *Famished* in general, counters Cooper's reading insofar as she pits traditionalism against a cosmopolitan newness, a position which becomes visible in the fuller context of the quote about the Photographer as world traveler. According to Cooper, the Photographer has "a messianic function" which "is not sought and found by way of reincarnation of the old gods, a re-birth which engages in a quite particular struggle for nationalist consolidation and healing. He revels in the experience of traveling the world and pits his cosmopolitanism against Dad's jealous monster of the road," 98. Her analysis misses the way Okri integrates tradition in Azaro's character, for example, as Okri both employs and reinterprets the abiku myth and, importantly, the traditional idea(s) it upholds about the nation, as will be discussed later.

¹¹ Roland Robertson refers to the term *glocalization*, a word developed "apparently in Japan" from *dochakuka*, meaning "global localization," in response to marketing issues, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992) 173.

¹² Quayson sees Dad's final journey to the spirit courts as representing "a prophetic and humanist mode of understanding the world for him," 143. While Quayson does not expand on this concept, he seems to be referring to the way that Dad's development requires that he use his (human) abilities to help bring about justice (the fair treatment of all humans) on earth.

¹³ McCabe contends this line exemplifies Okri's New Ageism, "Higher Realities: New Age Spirituality in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*," *Research in African Literatures* 36.4 (2005): 12.

¹⁴ To complicate matters further, Okri himself comments of the novel that it is "not meant to be coherent. It's against the perception of the world as being coherent and therefore readable as a text. The world isn't really a text, contrary to what people like Borges say. It's more than a text. It's more akin to music," "Ben Okri," *Talking with African Writers: Interviews with African Poets, Playwrights & Novelists*, ed. Jane Wilkinson (London: James Currey, 1990) 85.

¹⁵ Gerald Gaylard expands on the African realist tradition which emerged in the 1950s: "So science and empiricism formed the historical colonial backdrop to the epistemological impact of mimetic realism in the cultural foreground in Africa. Most African writers, uncomfortable with playing a role on this imperialist stage, adopted a form of realism that was apparently opposed to colonization, a social realism partly derived from socialist realism but with a strong inheritance from naturalism and from indigenous traditions." He lists several critics who identify there being an "absence of non-realism from Africa's fictional canon until the 1980s," *After Colonialism: African Postmodernism and Magical Realism* (Johannesburg, Wits UP, 2005) 18.

¹⁶ Okri's abiku nation calls to mind platonic idealism. He also articulates something very similar to this philosophical paradigm in a short collection of essays, *Birds of Heaven* (London: Phoenix, 1996), "The greatest inspiration, the most sublime ideas of living that have come down to humanity come from a higher realm [...]. Before these ideas came to us they were pure [...]. But when they come to our earthly realm they acquire weight and words. They become less. The sweetest notions, ideas of universal love and justice, love for one another, or intuitions of joyful creation, these are all perfect in their heavenly existences," 12-13.

¹⁷ Besides the instances of disappointment after decolonization such as that depicted in *Famished*, perhaps one factor in this reading of more recent African narrative treatments of the nation involves the lenses through which these narratives are read, what Robert Eric Livingston

identifies as “a particular affinity for visions of the end of the nation-state” in “literary studies”: “This theme [the decline of the nation-state] can find considerable resonance in literary studies. Certainly, the cultural critique of nativism; the historical construction of the nation and nationalism; the endorsement of cultural identity as chosen rather than fated, as hybrid rather than organic—these function as virtually self-evident truths in the field and perhaps more broadly as well,” “Glocal Knowledges: Agency and Place in Literary Studies,” *PMLA* 116.1 (2001): 154.

¹⁸ While, largely, critics have not addressed the relationship between Okri and humanism, in the 1998 Phoenix Paperback edition of *Infinite Riches* two of the numerous blurbs printed with the novel signal the narrative’s humanism. *Financial Times* writes: “Okri is an important writer because of the startling clarity and determination of his humanism.” *Sunday Times* also suggests this: “Like all of Okri’s work, *Infinite Riches* is a humane book with flashes of great beauty.”

¹⁹ In *Famished* Azaro has a vision of the prior arrival of Europeans on Nigerian soil, “I ran till I came to the Atlantic, silver and blue under the night of the forests. [...] The ghost ships of centuries arrived endlessly on the shores. [...] The white ones, ghost forms on deep nights, stepped on our shores, and I heard the earth cry,” 457.

²⁰ Halliwell and Mousley note that they are drawing these three aspects from Iain Chambers, 3-4.

²¹ Renato Oliva suggests that this particular scene is a representation of the “animal drives” that are “inside men,” a reading that does not go far enough, I suggest, in explaining how the narrative employs spirit-human hybridization to condemn the political party affiliates, “Re-Dreaming the World: Ben Okri’s Shamanic Realism,” Linguanti, Casotti, and Concilio, 179.

²² When analyzing the relationship among politics and the supernatural in *Famished*, Oliva and Anna Smith emphasize, to borrow from Smith, Okri’s “relocation of politics from a material, secular environment to a psycho/mythic region,” 45. Oliva’s Jungian reading of *Famished* and Smith’s non-Western dream analysis diverge in the resources from which they draw, as Smith argues against either a Jungian or Freudian analysis, but these critics similarly explain the intermixture of the political and spiritual as *Famished Road*’s dramatizing the power of the mythic, oneiric, and psychic on (political) everyday reality. These aspects which Oliva’s and Smith’s work illuminate are indeed crucial to *Famished*, as well as to other pieces of his writing, both prose and poetry. However, to view the novel only from this angle occludes the way *Famished* employs the supernatural as a means of demarcating the antagonists and protagonists. The latter group, as has been shown, encompass a crucial values hierarchy in which the immaterial is to support the material, a domain in which human being takes primacy of place. The goal of employing the powerful force of dreaming, for example, as Dad does at the end of the novel, is to dream *the world* anew, 492. See Oliva, 185-86; Smith, “Dreams of Cultural Violence: Ben Okri and the Politics of the Imagination,” *World Literature Written in English* 38.2 (2000): 44-54.

²³ *Famished* won the Booker Prize for fiction in 1991.

²⁴ *Famished* does not completely vilify the occultists, or at least not the herbalists and priests. Azaro’s grandfather, the Priest of the God of Roads, is revered by the family and assists them on several occasions, 70. Also, there are numerous examples when herbalists help Azaro’s family when they have become ill or are in the land of the spirits. However, the moments when they do help the family are tainted, and here again this is because of their exploitation of the

supernatural for personal gain. When herbalists assist the family, they charge exorbitant prices from these already impoverished, desperate families. Still, the narrative leaves a door open for herbalists and priests to play a role in contributing to the nation. In *Songs*, Dad wants to incorporate traditional rituals into his imagined country, “Rituals would be used for reasons that make us take life more seriously and more joyfully, instead of being corrupted into instruments of terror,” 125. In line with the narrative’s humanist values, Dad suggests that rituals and tradition are valuable insofar as they enhance the mortal plane of existence.

²⁵ Deandrea lists as examples of politicians who exploit the supernatural Madame Koto, the blind old man, and the Masquerade, 54-56.

²⁶ See Caroline Rooney, “Postcolonial Complementarity,” *Anglistica* 7.2 (2003): 59-79.

This model encompassed by complementarity evokes deep resonances with magical realism as defined by Slemon, “The term ‘magic realism’ is an oxymoron, one that suggests a binary opposition between the representational code of realism and that, roughly, of fantasy. In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the ‘other,’ a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences,” 409.

²⁷ Warnes also delineates this critical debate, locating three dominant responses to the novel: the novel “has been read as heir to a tradition of Nigerian writing [...]; as part of a configuration of recent west African novels [...] which represents the advent of a postcolonial postmodernism in African writing; and as sharing commonalities with the projects of a global set of writers who engage in non-realist narrative strategies, especially magical realism [...],” 124.

²⁸ Zamora, Faris, Warnes, Wen-chin Ouyang, and Stephen Hart, are a few examples of many critics who address magical realism as an international mode. See Zamora and Faris’s “Introduction: Daiquiri Birds and Flaubertian Parrot(ie)s,” Zamora and Faris, 1-11; Hart and Ouyang, eds. Hart and Ouyang.

²⁹ Pointing to biblical passages John 11:1-44 and Luke 16:19-31, Deandrea suggests that in addition to the “resuscitated Lazarus” whom *Famished* specifically invokes, “the name could also refer to the other biblical Lazarus, the beggar who fed on the rich man’s leftovers,” 50.

³⁰ Deandrea is one critic who exemplifies attention to both the transgeographical associations of *Famished* while insisting on its cultural specificity. Nevertheless, he classifies *Famished Road* as magical realism based on a generic (in both senses of the word) attribute, the “boundary” of “human and supernatural worlds [...] continuously blurs,” 34.

³¹ Warnes has also noticed this, describing how Okri’s arguments “uncannily echo those made by the very Latin American magical realists from whom he is trying to distance himself.” Regarding this particular point of intersection, Warnes expounds further than I do here, listing the commonalities among Okri and Carpentier as their common (tenuous) claims about the need for faith, their territorializing the imaginary (Chanady’s term), and their uses of literature to accomplish both, 143-45.

Carpentier’s effort to distinguish *lo real maravilloso* from the Surrealists seems acutely ironic in that the word *maravilloso* forever links Carpentier’s concept to the Surrealists, as González Echevarría points out: “[...] the Surrealists, especially Breton in the first *Manifesto* (1924), proclaim the ‘marvelous’ (*le merveilleux*) an aesthetic category and even a way of life”

109. González Echevarría later explicitly clarifies the link among *lo real maravilloso* and the Surrealists, “Carpentier perhaps remembered Roh’s book in creating the oxymoron ‘marvelous reality’ (the ‘marvelous,’ however, derived from Surrealism) [...]” 115.

³² González Echevarría describes this aspect of Carpentier’s prologue to *Kingdom*, “[...] Carpentier’s essay affirms that the marvelous still exists in Latin America, and reveals itself to those who believe in it, not to those who would apprehend it by a reflexive, self-conscious act,” 123.

³³ West African magical realism, according to Deandrea, demarcates “the authors who inaugurated magical realism in Anglophone West African prose, beginning in the mid 1980s: the Sierra Leonean Syl Cheney-Coker, the Nigerian Ben Okri and the Ghanaian Kojo Lang,” 29.

³⁴ Deandrea raises the question of whether marvelous realism should be used in distinction from magical realism in order to differentiate texts that rely on indigenous resources from those that use a variety of influences for the supernatural. He concludes, “The most common term ‘magical realism’ is used here in order to identify its different strains and forms of expression in West African anglophone novels through a study of each work, rather than by fiddling with labels of relative importance,” 35. However, I maintain the phrase marvelous realism for the way it usefully draws attention to the genealogy I am following through the term.

³⁵ Using García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame* as prototypes of magical realism in order to formulate a definition of the literary term, Durix implicitly describes magical realism in humanist terms when he writes, “These novels, which have a strong realistic basis, depict large communities in the process of making their own history in the face of strong imperialistic resistance,” 146. As I will describe, the emphasis on reality and the making of history are key characteristics in the depictions of the marvelous reality of Carpentier, Alexis, and Okri.

³⁶ This moment in *Kingdom* also calls to mind *Famished Road*’s juxtaposition of two of its abikus, Ade and Azaro, “Ade wanted to leave, to become a spirit again, free in the captivity of freedom. I wanted the liberty of limitations, to have to find or create new roads from this one which is so hungry, this road of our refusal to be,” 478. While the spirit world offers only “the captivity of freedom,” mortality creates a space for the “liberty of limitations,” the superior opportunity within the values hierarchy of both *Famished* and *Kingdom*.

³⁷ This usage of the magical and the real suggests an additional, and earlier, link among *lo real maravilloso* and the writings of Franz Roh, the man with whom many critics usually begin their genealogies of magical realism. There is no facile linkage among the 1920s post-Expressionist painting Roh was describing and the Latin American literature of the 50s and 60s about which the term next surfaced. Zamora and Faris document, “Roh’s 1925 essay was translated into Spanish and published by José Ortega y Gasset’s influential *Revista de Occidente* in Madrid in 1927; it was also published in Spanish in expanded form as a book in the same year,” 15. Also, Carpentier was aware of Roh’s article as well as its Spanish translation and distinguishes *lo real maravilloso* from it on the grounds of organicism, while expressing his characteristic Latin American territorialism, “On the other hand, the marvelous real that I defend and that is our own marvelous real is encountered in its raw state, latent and omnipresent, in all that is Latin America,” “Baroque,” 102-04.

Still, Roh’s explanations about the thrust of the painting movement *Magischer Realismus* parallel marvelous realism in its emphasis on reality. In this new school of painting, Roh writes, “our real world re-emerges before our eyes, bathed in the clarity of a new day,” 17. He refers

later to “the calm admiration of the magic of being,” 20. Zamora emphasizes the significant relationship between the magic and real in Roh’s theorizations, “For Roh, there does seem to be a direct relation between the realism of the visual image and the magic [...] a relation that underlines his assertion that the magical in magical realism wells up from the world as we know it,” 25. However, González Echevarría suggests that a crucial distinction should be made among Roh’s magical realism and Carpentier’s “marvelous American reality,” “The first, stemming from Roh’s book, is phenomenological; the second is ontological and of Surrealist background,” 113. While the former suggests only the experience of the magic, Carpentier insisted upon the actual existence of the marvelous. Still, these various voices (Roh’s, Carpentier’s, and Okri’s) converge in a perspective of magic as infusing the real, a view that contrasts with the other view of magic in magical realism as subversive which is embodied in the prevalent view of the opposition between local magic and Western epistemology.

³⁸ I am using an expanded version of Carpentier’s prologue from the collection *Tientos and diferencias* translated by Zamora and Faris in their anthology, *Magical Realism*, 76.

³⁹ J. Michael Dash argues that with his theorizations on marvelous realism Alexis rejects the universalizing aspects of *négritude*, “the myth of a universal Negro-African civilization,” because it forestalls the ability of a particular people to create and survive in the midst of oppression, “Marvelous Realism: The Way Out of *Négritude*,” *Caribbean Studies* 13.4 (1974): 68. I am emphasizing a universal aspect within Alexis’ work, his humanism, though one which retains the significance of particularities.

Chapter Three

¹ García, introduction, *¡Cubanísimo!* (New York: Vintage, 2003) xxi; Laing, *The Politics of the Family and Other Essays* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1969) 87.

² The larger context within which characters are situated is a crucial aspect of all of García’s novels, one she self-consciously includes: “What I am attracted to, in terms of my own reading, and drawn to, in terms of my own writing, are stories that are part of a larger historical sweep. I’m hooked by stories that reverberate both ways, from the individual fictional characters out into the history and from the history back to and affecting, dislocating, and variously traumatizing or enhancing the lives of my characters,” “An Interview with Cristina García: Conducted by Ylce Irizarry,” *Contemporary Literature* 48.2 (2007): 185-86.

³ When asked by Iraida H. López in an interview if the del Pino family is symbolic of larger Cuban issues, García responds: “I didn’t set out with that in mind. My aim when I started writing the novel was to stay very close to the characters themselves. I wasn’t trying to make any of the women emblematic of something larger than themselves. I tried to stay very close to their lives, their idiosyncrasies, their individual obsessions. It so happens that they are diametrically opposed politically,” “...And There is Only my Imagination Where our History Should be: An Interview with Cristina García,” *Bridges to Cuba / Puentes a Cuba*, ed. Ruth Behar, (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995) 106.

⁴ Using David Mitchell, Katherine B. Payant also addresses these dual layers and comes to a similar assessment of their interrelatedness, “Ultimately, one cannot separate the political from the personal in these novels [*Dreaming* and *The Agüero Sisters*] for they weave in and out of each other,” “Alienation to Reconciliation in the Novels of Cristina García,” *MELUS* 26.3 (2001): 165.

⁵ While Andrea O’Reilly Herrera notes the relationship between exile and “personal or emotional isolation,” she reads this in an analogical sense so that isolation in the form of a

mother's loss parallels the loss of Cuba, the mother country, "Aside from physical or geographical separation, the dual themes of revolution and exile also translate in the novel into either personal and linguistic loss, or psychic or emotional isolation," "Women and the Revolution in Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*," *Modern Language Studies* 27 (1997): 73.

⁶ García follows this theme along a more explicit and more sinister line in *The Agüero Sisters* in the murder of Blanca Agüero by her husband, Ignacio.

⁷ To employ Laing in this analysis is a recuperative act, as Laing is a somewhat unpopular and risky figure from whom to glean. While well-received in the first half of his career, he later lost the esteem of the public and critics. According to Victor Barbeti, "His later books, which include *The Facts of Life* (1976), *The Voice of Experience* (1982), and *Wisdom, Madness and Folly: The Making of a Psychiatrist* (1985) did not sell as well as his work from the 1960s. This turn in Laing's popularity was partly because of a radical shift in his subject matter. During the 70s and 80s, Laing was preoccupied with the influences of intra-uterine experience on development. This interest and the deepening theoretical contradictions within his own work were unappealing to most of Laing's more critically minded readers," "Classification and the Treatment of the Patient," *Janus Face* 4.1 (2001), U of Edinburgh electronic journals, directory of open access journals, 10 Sept. 2009. Still, I am aligning myself with Barbeti as well as other critics such as Daniel Burston and Gavin Miller in their common contention that Laing made useful contributions to various intellectual fields which are worthy of excavation and application, Daniel Burston, "Epilogue," *Janus Face* 4.1 (2001); Gavin Miller, *R. D. Laing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Review, 2004).

⁸ These types of criticisms caused others to identify Laing with the anti-psychiatry movement, though he rejected this association. According to Burston, "Despite his varied reputation, Laing always refused to embrace the label of 'anti-psychiatry' that was thrust on him by friends and critics alike. But when pressed by Richard Evans in 1976, Laing conceded that he felt deeply pessimistic about the future of psychiatry. He felt that psychiatry lacks a human heart, and seemed intent on becoming more heartless in the future," "R. D. Laing and the Politics of Diagnosis," *Janus Face* 4.1 (2001).

⁹ In "Women on the Verge of a Revolution: Madness and Resistance in Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*," Kimberle S. López references Laing in passing (her focus is on gender and madness as it relates to (un)conventional roles, domestic, political, social, and economic). Regarding Pilar and her tumultuous relationship with Lourdes, López suggests, "[...] as the young women described in Laing's *Sanity, Madness, and the Family*, Pilar's 'insanity' consists in her efforts to assert her autonomy in the face of a domineering mother," *Letras Femeninas* 22.1-2 (1996): 41.

¹⁰ Laing credits Searles' 1959 essay, "The Effort to Drive the Other Person Crazy," for this phrase, while expanding upon Searles' conclusions about it, *The Self and Others: Further Studies in Sanity and Madness* (London: Tavistock, 1961) 131.

¹¹ The narrative also suggests two other sources of Felicia's mental illness. First, she inherited it from her mother, Celia, and, second, it derives from her name, which Celia donned on her in memory of her friend from the mental institution. This latter Felicia also burned (and murdered) her husband. Both of these aspects underscore additional ways that the family nexus impacts Felicia, if other than neglect, one through a genetic inheritance and the other through a near-mystical bequeathal.

¹² Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert describe *Santería*, also called *Regla de Ocha*, as “the most complex and structured of the Afro-Cuban religions” which “can be broadly defined therefore as the veneration of the orishas [gods] of the Yoruba pantheon as identified with their corresponding Catholic saints. [...] As the orishas in Cuba were referred to by the Spanish word *santos* the practice came to be named Santería, the worship or way of the saints,” *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo* (New York: New York UP, 2003) 32-33.

¹³ The quoted portion in Kathleen Brogan comes from James Stuart Olson and Judith E. Olson, *Cuban Americans: From Trauma to Triumph* (New York: Twayne, 1995).

¹⁴ Lourdes also evokes another significant point raised by Hobsbawm in the way that her patriotism harkens back to the immigrant history of America. Referring to the USA’s problem of making Americans because so many people “were Americans not by birth but by immigration,” Hobsbawm states, “The invented traditions of the U.S.A. in this period were primarily designed to achieve this object,” “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 279-80.

¹⁵ The geo-cultural transatlantic link among Okri’s *Famished*, which imaginatively depicts Nigeria, and García’s *Dreaming* is also pronounced in the latter’s inclusion of *Santería*. Luis Manuel Núñez describes, “Santería’s roots are in Africa, in the Yoruba religions native to Nigeria,” *Santería: A Practical Guide to Afro-Caribbean Magic* (Dallas: Spring, 1992) 3.

¹⁶ In *The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), Gustavo Pérez Firmat describes a wider context in which one can place Carpentier’s triangulation. Carpentier was one of numerous Cuban intellectuals grappling with multiple influences (in Cuban history and in their own lives) in order to answer what was, during the first three to four decades of the twentieth century, the pressing question of Cuban identity. Authors of this era “repeatedly return to the same set of related issues: the ‘Cuban character,’ the meaning of a national culture, the tension between Cuba’s Iberian and African heritage, and the effects of U.S. imperialism. [...] From Europe and Spain the Cuban writer inherited a set of artistic and literary resources, a grammar of literary and linguistic usage, as it were. His task was now to produce a vernacular equivalent of this grammar by combining elements from the European tradition with those from other cultures,” 5-6. Carpentier’s response to the formation of a Cuban literary vernacular was his influential *lo real maravilloso*.

¹⁷ I gleaned this concept of the “territorialization” of magic by Carpentier from Amaryll Chanady’s “The Territorialization of the Imaginary in Latin America: Self-Affirmation and Resistance to Metropolitan Paradigms,” Zamora and Faris, 125-44.

¹⁸ Faris sees the magical detail as functioning to support a characteristic she describes as magical realism’s “encoding of the ineffable,” or the dimension of spirit and mystery, *Ordinary* 68-70. Though an important concept, I am not broaching it here.

¹⁹ The literalization of metaphor is Faris’s idea presented first in the previous chapter on Okri’s *Famished*.

²⁰ This moment seems to enact a wish expressed by Dulce, a character from García’s subsequent novel *The Agüero Sisters* (London: Picador, 1997): “Some days I feel the hot mist of the past on my back, all the generations preceding me, whispering *this way and this way and not that*. There should be rituals like in primitive societies, where the elders confer their knowledge on their descendants bit by bit. Then we could dismiss all the false histories pressed upon us,

accumulate our true history like a river in rainy season,” 142. Pilar’s and Dulce’s characters also parallel each other in that both carry a defiant air, yet struggle with their senses of place.

²¹ Luce Irigaray, “La Mysterique,” *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984) 191-202.

²² Pérez Firmat borrows this concept from Rubén Rumbaut, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1994) 4.

²³ Pérez Firmat describes of “biculturation,” “Unlike acculturation or transculturation, biculturation implies an equilibrium, however tense or precarious between the two contributing cultures. Cuban-American culture is a balancing act. One-and-a-halfers are no more American than they are Cuban—and vice versa. Their hyphen is a seesaw: it tilts first one way, then the other. The game ends at some point (the one-and-a-half generation passeth away), and the board then comes to rest on one side. But in the meantime it stays in the air, uneasily balancing one weight against the other,” *Life* 6.

²⁴ Herrera interprets Lourdes’ rape in a different analytical framework. She identifies it as one of numerous instances which García uses to generate a parallel in the novel between the domestic and political spheres, specifically here between mothers and the motherland, Cuba. Herrera comments on this instance as exemplifying the theme of loss which characterizes both Cuba and the Cuban mothers in the novel, “Because rape is yet another form of loss, and the knife that the soldier uses to carve an inexplicable message in Lourdes’ belly is an obvious symbol of male power, this scene implies that the victimization of the female is tantamount to the abuse which continues to characterize Castro’s authoritarian, paternalistic government,” 73.

²⁵ Garica’s *A Handbook to Luck* (New York: Random, 2007) also incorporates the wider Caribbean and even South America in, for example, this instance, “Once Papi had been famous throughout the Caribbean. He’d performed regularly in the Dominican Republic and Panama and as far south as coastal Columbia,” 8.

Chapter Four

¹ The first quote is from Rushdie’s *Imaginary Homelands*, 100. The second is from the same collection wherein Rushdie comments on this quote from Saul Bellow’s *The Dean’s December*, “The central character [...] hears a dog barking wildly somewhere. He imagines that the barking is the dog’s protest against the limit of dog experience. [...] I have the feeling that the dog’s rage, and its desire, is also mine, ours, everyone’s,” 21.

² For another discussion of the local/cosmopolitan dichotomy see Gavin Kendall, Ian Woodward and Zlatko Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), 36-40. Robertson has also discussed particularism and universalism, contending for the “interpenetration” of the two in the late twentieth century, 100.

³ In *Shame*, Rushdie denounces the use of religion to justify dictatorship, “So-called Islamic ‘fundamentalism’ does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above. Autocratic regimes find it useful to espouse the rhetoric of faith, because people respect that language, are reluctant to oppose it. This is how religions shore up dictators; by encircling them with words of power, words which the people are reluctant to see discredited, disenfranchised, mocked,” (London: Pan Books, 1983) 251. He echoes this later in his essay “In God We Trust” (1985, 1990), “The religious revivals of the world are continuations of the political process by other means,” *Imaginary* 389.

⁴ As mentioned in chapter two, conflicting loyalties is Rorty’s phrase.

⁵ In another interview, this one with journalist Charlie Rose, Rushdie describes that when he began working on *Enchantress*, he “expected to be writing a book about two incredibly dissimilar worlds [...] colliding [...]” However, he was “surprised” at an alternate discovery: “[...] the more I found out about them the more similarities I found,” “A Conversation with Author Salman Rushdie,” *Charlie Rose*, 30 June 2008 <<http://www.charlierose.com>>.

⁶ Rushdie identifies this statement as encapsulating the “author’s lesson from the book,” “Conversation.”

⁷ JoAnn Conrad notes that “the attempt to rehabilitate Machiavelli from his tarnished reputation,” which is at play in *Enchantress*, “has, in fact, been a long-standing project of Rushdie’s [...],” rev. of *The Enchantress of Florence*, by Salman Rushdie, *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 23.2 (2009): 435. See, for an example, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Picador, 1988) 415.

⁸ This point is part of Justin Neuman’s analysis of *Enchantress*’s secular humanism, “The Fictive Origins of Secular Humanism,” rev. of *The Enchantress of Florence*, by Salman Rushdie, *Criticism* 50.4 (2008) 675-82.

⁹ The editors of this edition of *Enchantress* note that the front endpapers are a detail from *The Building of Fatehpur Sikri Palace* from the *Akbarnama*, and the back is from *Carta della Catena* from the Museo di Firenze Com’era.

¹⁰ In a lecture given for Authors@Google, Rushdie insists upon the hybrid “interpenetration” of East and West in history, but then goes a step further stressing that the different epochs of history are unified by “the great constant” of “human nature,” “The two [past and future] are not as disconnected as you think. [...] we’ve always been up to this stuff. Frankly, the great constant is human nature, and if we are brutal now, we were brutal then. If we are treacherous and untrustworthy now, we were treacherous and untrustworthy then. And, you know, good things, too. [...] the species we belong to has always acted in substantially the same way, when you look back at this period [...],” “Authors@Google: Salman Rushdie,” 16 June 2008, 5 Sept. 2008 <<http://www.uk.youtube.com>>.

¹¹ Faris lists this aspect among a group of secondary characteristics, clarifying that this group “serves less to distinguish magical realism from the rest of contemporary literature than to situate it within postmodernism,” “Scheherazade’s Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction,” Zamora and Parkinson, 175.

¹² While I am suggesting the differences among Calvino’s and Rushdie’s uses of the specific device of doubling, critics have noted more general resonances among *Enchantress* and Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*. See Conrad 436; Andrew Martino, rev. of *The Enchantress of Florence*, by Salman Rushdie, *World Literature Today* 83.1 (2009): 70-71.

¹³ Rushdie alludes to the contemporary relevance for his historical novel in his Authors@Google lecture, “So you have to see [East and West] in that way [as profoundly interpenetrated and interdependent]. I think to look at the world that way, whether we’re speaking about the sixteenth century or twenty-first is, I think, a useful antidote to a lot of the other stuff that we’re fed. I am not trying to say it’s a didactic book, because I actually don’t like books that wag fingers at the reader and say, ‘Here’s how to think,’ well not novels anyway. I think the art of the novel is to tell a story and to draw the reader in and to allow the reader to draw their own conclusions from the story they’re told so that you won’t find in this book any kind of neon signs saying, ‘Here’s the contemporary relevance’; but if you find it, it’s almost certainly there because, after all, I’m writing from a position now, so my concerns also are the

concerns of people living now. And in a way the book wouldn't have been written if it hadn't been for that fact because why do it? Why go back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to find a novel?"

¹⁴ As mentioned, there are three other exile figures I recognize in *Enchantress* are the Rana of Cooch Naheen, Argalia, and Princess Guldaban, Akbar's aunt. The Rana is beheaded by Akbar for talking about freedom. Argalia is killed by a Florentine mob, who is after Qara Kōz, while trying to help Qara Kōz escape. Guldaban, on the other hand, is the only exile figure who does not suffer for her strategy of belonging. This, however, can be explained by the fact that she is protected by the emperor Akbar, unlike her predecessor, Qara Kōz, whose brother, the emperor Babar, disowns her for betraying the particularist strategy of belonging.

¹⁵ Appiah argues that when "moral equality" is invoked by extreme cosmopolitans, it is often done so erroneously. The notion that all humans are to be treated equally is a categorical mistake, he insists. Governments, not individuals, should treat people as fundamentally the same: "[...] the state is to display equal respect to its citizens. Where we go wrong is to suppose that individuals should be subject to the same constraint." Among individuals, special relationships deserve special attention, care, and loyalty, while one owes much less to distant human beings, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005) 228.

¹⁶ Amanda Anderson outlines "a belief in universal humanity" as one of three traits which most cosmopolitans share, though all three traits are stressed in differing degrees, she suggests, a point which explains the varying strains of cosmopolitanism, "Cosmopolitanism, Universalism, and the Divided Legacies of Modernity," *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998) 267. What is distinctive about the universal cosmopolitanism of Nussbaum and *Enchantress*, I submit, is their use of this ideal in conjunction with a moral prescription which denigrates loyalties to traditional groupings smaller than humanity, an approach which extends a singular way of being in the world.

¹⁷ Robbins observes, "Recently, moreover, philosophical arguments in favor of universalism have returned with a vengeance, bringing with them renewed advocacy of cosmopolitanism in the older sense," "Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism," Cheah and Robbins, 2.

¹⁸ Originally published in the *Boston Review*, Nussbaum's article as well as the responses have now been published in book form. See *For Love of Country?*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon, 2002).

¹⁹ Kendall, Woodward, and Skrbis use the term "cosmopolitan universalism" to refer to Nussbaum's theorizations, 37.

The term "rooted cosmopolitanism" comes from Appiah, who uses this in his response to Nussbaum's "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in his article, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," Cohen, 22, and again as a title for a chapter of his book, *The Ethics of Identity*.

²⁰ One might contrast this use of *absurd* in *Enchantress* with the use of the same word in *The Satanic Verses*, wherein it signifies not the human condition and the deprecation of vernacular attachments, but the impossibility of translating particular cultural raw materials which describes the fragmented immigrant condition, "Also—for there had been more than a few migrants aboard [...] mingling with the remnants of the plane, equally fragmented, equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished features, lost loves, the

forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home*,” (New York: Picador, 1988) 4-5.

²¹ In addition to “extreme cosmopolitanism,” a term Calhoun borrows from Samuel Scheffler, Calhoun also calls this strain cosmopolitan liberalism, liberal universalism, and strong cosmopolitanism, “‘Belonging’ in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary,” *Ethnicities* 3 (2003): 534, 541, 550.

²² See also Homi Bhabha, “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence, 1990) 207-21.

²³ A crucial philosophical question raised by these myriad examples of theorists (re)asserting the essentialist, universalist category of human being is how this belief is grounded. Unfortunately, this is an issue I cannot delve into here.

²⁴ At the Edinburgh Book Festival 2008, Rushdie discussed the way Qara Köz’s powers of enchantment accentuate feminist issues, reading of *The Enchantress of Florence*, Edinburgh International Book Festival, Edinburgh, Scotland, Aug. 2008. This is seen particularly in the conflated relationship between her power to enchant and her physical attractiveness (she is the most beautiful woman in the world). While the parameters of my study do not allow a discussion of gender issues here, the use of Qara Köz as an imagined, magical bridge between East and West evokes Faris’s suggestion of ways that magical realism might “perpetuate[] some of patriarchal culture’s stereotypes, using female bodies as a bridge to the beyond, for instance,” *Ordinary*, 4. Fuller attention to this in *Enchantress* would need to take into account, on the other hand, ways in which Rushdie is exploring the dangerous historical correlation between femininity and witchcraft.

Conclusion

¹ Anderson is specifically commenting here on the strong “normativity” which characterizes the new cosmopolitanism, though the same might be said, I think, of cosmopolitanism in general.

² Brennan refers to cosmopolitan authors in *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*, viii. Bishnupriya Ghosh also suggests cosmopolitan authorship as well as cosmopolitan literature when she cites a strand of “cosmopolitical South Asian writing,” naming as exemplars authors Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, and Arundhati Roy, all fourth-generation South Asians writing in English, *When Borne Across: Literary Cosmopolitics in the Contemporary Indian Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004) 5.

Berthold Schoene posits the rise of the cosmopolitan novel in contemporary British fiction in his book by the same name, *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009).

Though inhabiting different theoretical positions within cosmopolitanism, Appiah and Nussbaum share a belief in cosmopolitan reading and, as a significant component of it, the narrative imagination; see Nussbaum’s *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997) and Appiah’s “Cosmopolitan Reading,” *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*, ed. Vinay Dharwadker (New York: Routledge, 2001) 197-227. Robbins performs a cosmopolitan reading of two novels, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Remains of the Day* and Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*. Interested in these narratives’ “tonal experiments with cosmopolitanism,” Robbins explores how Ishiguro’s and Ondaatje’s texts exhibit the relationship between professionalism and cosmopolitanism, “The Village of the Liberal Managerial Class,” Dharwadker, 16, 23-24.

In their *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader*, editors Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor suggest cosmopolitanism as a theoretical paradigm through which to study transatlantic literature, recommending it as one of several “important models for the practice of transatlantic literary critique,” “Introduction: What is Transatlantic Literary Studies?” (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2007) 5.

In *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment*, Amanda Anderson suggests there are “affinities” between cosmopolitanism and her focus on detachment, though she does not use cosmopolitanism as her organizing rubric, 30-31. At the same time, she explores Victorian conceptions of cosmopolitanism in parts of her book and uses insights from contemporary cosmopolitan debates as well as Victorian understandings to analyze both narrative and historical figures, namely George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, Charles Dickens’ *Little Dorrit* (as well as Dickens’ own cosmopolitan attitudes, 69-71), and Matthew Arnold, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001).

³ Ouyang makes a similar point after criticizing the way that insights from Latin American magical realism have been applied too broadly. Now that the mode has grown into an international phenomenon, she contends, theoretical frameworks need to expand as well: “These broad theoretical principles, under close scrutiny, are at risk of becoming a straightjacket, especially for non-Spanish American texts, potentially obscuring other equally important theoretical principles,” 16.

⁴ Barth includes Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and García Márquez as examples of authors writing postmodernist fiction, a literature, he writes, that “I hope might also be thought of one day as a literature of replenishment” which followed an “exhausted” modernist body of literature, “The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction,” *The Atlantic* 245.1 (1980): 66, 71. I am not employing Barth’s same sense of temporal-aesthetic categories, postmodernism following modernism. To cite one reason, his usages differ from mine, as I distinguish between magical realism’s Latin American and postmodern phases, showing that the inclusion of postmodernist conceptions of the mode altered Latin American paradigms. Nevertheless, I am borrowing and extending his intimation of magical realism as offering literary replenishment in contrast to an exhausted literature.

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